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In Hindi

Bharatiya Rajniti—Victoria se Nehru tak
Hindi ke Sangharsh ka Itihas
Lokamanya Tilak

HOW INDIA STRUGGLED FOR FREEDOM

(A Political History)

RAM GOPAL

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CONTENTS

1

Scope and Content of the Struggle

In 1757 the so-called Battle of Plassey laid the foundations of the British Empire in India, and in 1947 the British Parliament divested itself of the empire by an act called the Indian Independence Act. The circumstances, events and agitations of a long period that preceded the latter date are generally known as the Indian freedom movement. That those events and agitations constituted the freedom movement cannot be disputed; what can be disputed is whether a movement like the one prosecuted in India could drive out a power like the British without the peculiarly propitious attendant circumstances. British rule was different from that of the Mughals. In the case of the British, an entire nation possessed the ruling power and exercised it through a representative body—Parliament. In the Mughal period of foreign rule, the power resided in individual emperors. The system of government in Britain itself contained elements which, according to their very nature, grew into a full-fledged people's government. There were no such elements in the political system of the Mughals. It will be a different argument altogether to contend that democracy as we now understand it is a recent development in human history. We are concerned here with the actual circumstances as they were under the two foreign powers. And then it will have to be conceded that a new political idea is not likely to be practised by every people. The present age itself provides conspicuous proofs. But this comparison cannot be used to justify the coming and continuance of British rule in India. The usefulness of the difference here consists in the peculiar circumstances in so far as they contributed to the movement preparing the people for independence. It is one thing to snatch power from the hands of a

foreign ruler by force, whether of the sword or of non-violence; it is quite another to develop in a dependency the pre-requisites of democracy and then to ask the rulers, pronouncedly wedded to democracy, to hand over power to the people.

In Britain, in the days of the struggle for people's democracy, the king and his bureaucracy were not eager to promote the new idea. But they had to bow before the popular agitation, and the result was the evolution of a system under which the real power passed into the hands of the people. Judged by the present standards there was little of democracy in Britain then. In Parliament the aristocracy was firmly entrenched. The country was ruled by the rich and for the rich; legislation favoured the powerful, the landed nobility and the wealthy classes, and virtually neglected the masses. While the British people were agitating for adequate representation in Parliament, men of the East India Company were engaged in political manœuvrings in India and fighting for imperial supremacy.

In Britain the king was not a foreigner, and all that the agitators wanted was democratization of the rule. In India every man or woman possessing a sense of discrimination knew that a race from a long distance, very different in language, religion, culture and customs, had usurped power in the country, and also that the indigenous rulers being divided into hostile camps and there being no strong ruler at the centre, it was very difficult to remove the new dominant power. In Britain the people had imbibed the urge for the administration of public affairs through their own representatives. In India men's minds were still in the grip of the traditional system of absolute kingship; all that they could say, speaking generally, was that the Mughals, having become Indians for all practical purposes, were preferable to the English. But the thought that it was their duty to remove the foreign ruler never entered the minds of the general mass of the people; political affairs were exclusively the concern of kings, rajas and nawabs, and the masses were to provide only the mercenary soldiers. Ordinarily the soldiers fought for the master who paid them, and even the East India Company made voluntary recruitment from the open market. Therefore the feeling of dislike towards the rising British power, whatever its extent, remained dormant. To most people the going out

of old kings and coming in of new ones was a matter of routine; invasions and internecine wars were not very rare manifestations. A people's organization to fight the English was inconceivable, and it was quite natural to suggest that it was for Indian rulers to liquidate or tolerate the rising British power. The initiative lay with the ruling princes and not with the people.

Some of the princes and feudal lords did organize revolts, but arms, whether as displayed in the Revolt of 1857 or in any other, did not succeed in turning out the British. It has been claimed times without number by Indian political leaders that it was the force of non-violence and not violence that secured freedom. Violence was so emphatically abjured by Gandhi, the leader of the non-violent movement, that he would not concede any place to violent activities in the struggle which is regarded as having led to freedom. The beginning of this struggle is the beginning of a constitutional agitation organized and conducted by the leading men of the people, and not of the princes. It was the beginning of a feeling that the Indian people, through their representatives, should in some measure be associated with the governance and administration of the country. It came from the knowledge that such association was part of the British political system. Whatever the democratic content of that system at that time, the British Parliament was regarded to all intents and purposes as a representative body of the people, and this together with the popular agitations in several parts of Europe for political reforms gave rise to an urge in the countries under British rule that governmental organs must have the people's representatives in them. The British were still adding to their Indian empire when the demand for representation to the people, as different from the class of feudal and vested interests, was gaining momentum in Britain. Man's mind was marching towards full-fledged democracy, and there appeared in Britain political liberals who could not reconcile themselves to the incongruity of democracy at home and imperial subjugation abroad. They frankly expressed themselves and asserted that Britain had no right to hold India under an anachronistic system of subjection. Their voices were feeble and were drowned in the powerful tide of feelings of those who benefited by the economic exploitation

of India. But the echo they produced was bound to reverberate in distant corridors; it stayed because democracy was asserting itself and the power of vested interests was slowly declining. In British history a long period of time intervenes between the beginning of the agitation for democratic rights and the consummation of the demand; similarly in India a long period intervenes between the birth of the feeling that the people should be associated with government and the growth to full stature of the elements regarded by British authorities as the pre-requisites of full-fledged democratic institutions.

The period of 90 years between the Great Revolt of 1857 and declaration of independence by an act of Parliament in 1947 is ordinarily regarded as the period of the movement for freedom. We find that the British rulers in India during this period were miserly in responding to Indian demands for political reforms. The little amount of association with the political authority allowed to Indians was, it was supposed, commensurate with the little amount of democratic consciousness of the people: the number of those who constituted the people's agitation of the British variety in India was insignificant until the closing years of the 19th century. The agitators did not call their agitation freedom movement, they did not ask for British rule to be removed, they merely wanted it to be democratized to a certain extent. In a way the agitation was akin to its counterpart in Britain where, too, the removal of the Crown was never contemplated. A similar political behaviour in India betrayed helplessness on the one hand and on the other a belief that petitioning to the British rulers for reforms would yield some results. The amount of reforms granted at one time or another was a measure of the amount of popular backing behind the demand. To tell the people that they should have a voice in the government of their country was to expect them to believe in something strange, something impracticable. For long ages they had been accustomed to a tradition in which the king constituted the inevitable ruling institution and they were his obedient subjects; the king could not be dictated to about how he should rule. They could understand one ruling chief being thrown out by force by another, but not an altogether new political dispensation.

The new variety of activity in India therefore called for the transformation of a traditionally and mentally subject society into one receptive to democratic ideas and responding to the call for agitation. It was an arduous and stupendous task. The predominance of the feudal system was almost as pronounced in Britain as in India. But there was a striking difference. In Britain the people's campaigns against the dominating elements were not suppressed; in India the feudal system that had existed for ages received very powerful support from the British rulers who tried to use that system as a bulwark against the spread of democratic ideas. Most Britons who exercised ruling authority in India, belonged by temperament and training to the feudal order and would not tolerate such popular manifestations as would encourage the growth of a democratic society. The few decades immediately following the Great Revolt of 1857 compelled the ruling authority to think in terms of a people's movement, a movement not transcending the limits of official control. The situation was quite alarming. The defeat of Indians in the so-called first war of independence had no doubt largely impaired the moral stamina of the people, but violent force was still thought of as the only means of getting rid of the British. This thought arose from the feeling that economic exploitation of the people was never so merciless and so systematic as under British rule. It gave birth to an idea: that any government popularly so called should make it known that it would sympathetically consider representations of the people's grievances if they were peacefully made.

A study of the post-Revolt forces of violence, even if made with a liberal disposition, does not lend credence to the prospect of breakdown of British power. The rulers' policy of shifting their attention towards the method of peaceful representation blunted the edge of the sword and brought under the influence of that policy many educated people. Violence liquidated itself quickly—it would be incorrect to say that it had a big organization and following—and the age of speeches and resolutions began; the foundation of a democratic society was laid. Paradoxically, the new way of fighting British rule, the democratic way, was insulting to India's national pride.

It tacitly bade goodbye to any intention of removing it at once by force and turned Indians into petitioners who prefaced their prayers with humble expressions of loyalty to the British Crown. The petitioner can be fed on promises as long as the ruler knows that he does not enjoy the backing of the people to the extent of obstructing the functioning of government if their demands are not conceded. The ruler will not encourage the leaders of a democratic movement to gather such backing; on the contrary, he will take such steps as will serve to impede the process. But the new political thought came as a boon to the British. It deprived the Indian princes of the initiative and made the liquidation of the foreign power the concern of the people. The change in the traditional way ensured a long stay of British rule; a variety of obstacles was devised to make the progress of the people's movement as slow as possible. In the first few decades the activity of ventilating grievances and adopting resolutions addressed to the Government was confined to an insignificant minority of English-knowing Indians, particularly those who had earlier been associated with the Government as its servants. Those not knowing English were regarded as incapable of understanding the finer points of constitutional agitation.

A new variety of upper class akin to the dominating feudal class was thus born. It may have meant well in restricting the movement to the educated few, but under this dispensation the masses of the people were to remain as unconcerned with political affairs as under the old one. For about half a century, the so-called people's movement in India was a very tame affair. There was no likeness between it and, for example, the People's Charter Movement of Britain, which in the late 1830s manifested itself in monster meetings and mass appeals to the people in other ways. The petition presented by the Chartists in 1839 was signed by 1,286,000 and that presented in 1842 was said to have been signed by three million. The restriction adopted by the leaders of the Indian movement against the masses precluded the possibility of any large number of people lending their support to a demand. It held out little prospect of a general mass uprising, even constitutional, against the British, or of a democratic society coming

into existence within a reasonable space of time. The only hope of making the people realize that government affairs were their very own concern lay in lifting the barrier. There eventually appeared on the political scene leaders, English-educated of course, who flung the doors of the movement wide open by declaring that lack of English education was no bar to political or agitational participation.

But a certain capacity to speak and write English had become the criterion of an educated man. And although more people joined the movement, the character it had assumed in the beginning did not undergo any conspicuous change. The spectacle of millions coming forward to become members of the people's organization was still far ahead in the future. Right up to the beginning of the Gandhi era in politics, it was possible for a hundred thousand people to gather together on a religious issue, but not for a political meeting. Religious activity had for centuries been the public activity of the people. The rulers not only allowed it but encouraged it. Political agitations were regarded as rebellious acts and put down with a heavy hand. The British rulers learnt from their experience of Indian life that the only thing that could rouse Indians, if at all, to an agitational mood was an insult, real or supposed, to their religion.

The Great Revolt of 1857 provided the richest experience. Some princes and feudal lords had no doubt become disaffected to British rule and there were economic and social causes also behind the Revolt, but the one cause that was sedulously exploited to rouse the soldiery to action in order to fight the British and throw them out of India was purely religious. To describe it briefly, late in 1856 the Enfield rifle was introduced in India to replace the old smooth-bore musket. The new cartridge was greased with the fat of beef and pork to make it slip easily into the tightly-fitting bore. An army order required the soldiers to bite off the ends of the cartridges before loading. This was a serious offence to the religious susceptibilities of both the Hindu and Muslim soldiers. The leaders of the Revolt were no doubt motivated by a political objective, but they believed that only the exploitation of a religious sentiment and not a political appeal

could make the soldiers turn their rifles against the British. There had been a number of occasions when Indian army units had revolted against their British officers, but on most occasions the cause was the injury intended or done against religion. The British therefore scrupulously avoided acts that could be interpreted as interference with religion and thus secured the unshakable loyalty of Indian soldiers. With a few insignificant exceptions, the Indian army remained loyal to the British.

The predominant influence of religion on Indians' social, cultural and economic life asserted itself in the new pattern of political life; it provided the rulers also with an opportunity to impede a healthy and speedy growth of the people's movement. Inside a single religion in Britain there were sharp and bitter divisions, and it will perhaps be no exaggeration to say that the degree of religious tolerance in India was higher than was to be found in Europe in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. For example, the Scottish Parliament enacted in 1685 a law laying down that whoever preached or heard in conventicles would be punished with death and the confiscation of his goods. 'Shrieking Scotch Convenanters were submitted to torture by crushing their knees flat in the boot; women were tied to stakes on the sea-sands and drowned by the slowly advancing tide because they would not attend Episcopal worship, or branded on their cheeks and then shipped to America.... The court ladies, and even the Queen of England herself, were so utterly forgetful of womanly mercy and common humanity as to join in this infernal traffic.' Till as late as the twenties of the 19th century, no Catholic could be a member of Parliament, or hold any office in the state or municipality. Protestants who dissented from the Anglican Church were similarly debarred, but since they were Protestants after all, they were exempted from the restriction by the device of the so-called Act of Indemnity, passed each year by Parliament, pardoning them for having held the positions illegally during the year just past. The Dissenters were subjected to a burdensome and humiliating position.

Despite this background a common secular life developed in Britain, because popular political forces threw aside religious

barriers in order to reach a common goal and because there was no foreign agency to exploit the differences. In India religious differences were magnified into political differences. Any factor that delayed the progress of the people's movement and the evolution of a single secular community was bound to have the effect of prolonging the continuance of British rule and was therefore welcomed and avidly nourished. Indian history provided enough material for mischief-mongering. The Muslims came to India first as traders and then as rulers, and their numbers went on multiplying and they became the second largest community. Conversion was not prohibited by the Hindu rulers of India, and even before the Muslim invaders conquered the country many Hindus had entered the pale of Islam, mainly those who suffered from the social disabilities of Hinduism. Under many Muslim emperors and nawabs, Islam wielded considerable influence on state affairs, and the pace of conversion was accelerated; the occasions when force was used were not rare. This fact of history produced and was invoked to produce two view-points: the Muslims recalled with ambition and were constantly reminded that they were until recently rulers of India and enjoyed in political life a position of privilege; the Hindus entertained the hope that their higher numerical strength naturally would place them in their rightful position under a democratic set-up. From these feelings arose the tendency to associate religion with politics. Should the people's movement, Muslim leaders said, succeed in entering the citadel of political power, the Muslims would always be outvoted by the Hindus. Under Muslim rule, the Muslim masses were economically no better off than the Hindu masses, and it was only a small section of their community that enjoyed pelf, power and privileges. But so far as the propaganda value of the argument was concerned, there was enough plausibility in the point Muslim leaders made of it.

The invocation of religion for political purposes spreads like a contagion, and not only the Sikhs and the Christians but also the so-called 'untouchables' of Hindu society laid claims and secured the rulers' backing to their separate existence in the political life. Unlike Christianity and Islam, Hinduism has a host of scriptures, and some of them seriously conflict with

one another. The most authoritative of them do not prescribe untouchability, and yet Hinduism as it had been practised for centuries recognized it. Thus the soil for encouraging political separatism among the 'untouchables' was quite fertile. There came up leaders, however, who cursed the prevalent practice and saw in people's politics a way of partial redemption. The organization of the people's movement repudiated untouchability and contended that what should be fought is that evil and not the effort aimed at producing a single political community. The leading men of the movement and those who came under their influence discarded untouchability, but they were few and far between compared to the millions of Hindus who would not abjure the practice. The leaders of the untouchables were therefore attracted to the prospect of immediate gains and rejected the promise whose fulfilment was distant and doubtful. After the 1920s, the leader of the movement, Gandhi, no doubt succeeded to a considerable extent in weaning away patriotic elements from the influence of the leaders of the untouchables, but the insistence on separate representation remained. The British who backed it argued that they could not shut their eyes to the reality, which was that the class of people known as 'untouchables' were discriminated against in social and religious life.

The Sikhs, a small community and mainly confined to the Punjab, recalled, like the Muslims, that they had a proud past, they were once rulers of the Punjab, and had been a brave martial community. They apprehended, or the apprehension was imposed on their minds, that in a political system based on the counting of heads they would have precious little share if they allowed themselves to be merged in a single political community. Although quite a number of Sikhs joined the movement, in their case also, the attention was distracted from the desirability of forging a single national community to the preservation of their class interests. The Indian Christians and the Anglo-Indian Christians had not much social contact with other Indian communities and on this ground justified their demand for separate recognition. Such of them as joined the movement were dismissed as exceptions.

These developments naturally had their repercussions on the

efforts made to evolve a truly people's organization and on its evolution. While in the early years there was a fair amount of non-Hindu participation in the organization, it dwindled progressively as the separatist campaigns gathered momentum, making the movement look as though it was led and manned predominantly by Hindus. A contradictory situation presented itself: the organization justifiably claimed to being national and above the narrow interests of religion and caste, but non-Hindu leaders persistently and clamorously protested that it was a Hindu organization and that in the future democratic set-up the Hindu, unless proper safeguards were provided for the minorities, would establish a Hindu Raj, nay a caste Hindu Raj. The consequence was that while there grew a movement for democracy on the one side, there came up, on the other side, several communal bodies whose only aim was to share on a communal basis the gains resulting from the activities of the movement.

The most important factor that accounted for British opposition to the movement was the Indian empire's contribution to Britain's economic life. For a long time all the highest posts in the Indian administration were the monopoly of Britons. In the field of trade the exports to India of manufactured goods, particularly cotton piecegoods and the imports of raw material opened out avenues of employment for millions of people in Britain. Therefore a movement that threatened to curtail or demolish British overlordship was studied in the context of Britain's economic interests and was to be fought tooth and nail. The realization that British connection had been causing India's economic ruin had been made much of before the Revolt of 1857, and when Indian political activity was diverted mainly into the constitutional channel, the leading men of the national movement focussed attention on this issue again and again. Industrialists in Britain, who played a significant role in the political life of that country, exercised a good deal of influence over the British authority in India as on their own Government, and they did all that they could within the framework of the British political system to check the tide of nationalism in India. The Indian police and the network of the feudal system which enjoyed British favours and which used those favours to oppress the peasantry were freely made use of to terrorise the people.

Any opposition to Government was interpreted as disaffection towards the British Crown; disaffection was a common charge against any utterance critical of Government. In villages the people lived under the terror of a dark feudal age; those who were not victimised by the police, by the revenue staff, and by their feudal chiefs considered themselves fortunate. It was idle to expect from these pitiable millions any disposition to join the people's movement and become members of the organization which conducted it.

Narrow communal factions, the mischievous elements in the feudal order, and Government designs considerably complicated the task of the leaders, but they never allowed the purity of the democratic content of the movement to be impaired. They maintained the pace of progress with the following available to them. There was ever greater awakening after each milestone on the road to progress was reached, and even those who, in their own short-sighted interests had at first been arrayed against the movement, were affected by the diffusion of democratic ideas around them. Communal leaders, who in the beginning contended that British rule in India was essential for the preservation of religious minorities and other vested interests, gradually began to favour the establishment of democratic institutions, but with adequate safeguards for them.

The political history of the period of the Indian freedom movement can be regarded as consisting of three component phases: the demand for full-fledged democracy, that is, complete independence; the demand of the minorities to share power adequately, and British response to these demands. The milestones in the British response, which the people's movement reached after different kinds of agitations, were: (1) The Indian Councils Act of 1861, which for the first time provided for the admission of Indians into the higher councils of the Government. (2) The Indian Councils Act of 1892, by which the number of Indians for the Councils was raised. (3) The Indian Councils Act of 1909, which while further raising the number of Indian representatives, allowed them greater scope for discussion. (4) The Act of 1919, which while giving a new instalment of reforms, provided for Indian Ministers, alongside official (British) members, to take charge of certain departments. The

Preamble to this Act provided: 'it is the declared policy of Parliament to provide for the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration and for the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the empire'. (5) The Government of India Act, 1935 which established nearly wholly elected legislative assemblies in the provinces (but not at the centre) and popular ministries with British Governors heading them. (6) The Indian Independence Act, 1947, the final act of complete withdrawal of British power from India. The political events that prevailed upon the British Parliament to give away the different instalments of legislative powers and finally the Independence Act constitute the freedom movement. The British had to recognize that the Indian people were generally behind the people's movement conducted by the Indian National Congress. The fact was vindicated by the overwhelming majority of votes polled by the Congress in the elections under the 1935 Act, and British withdrawal, though belated, was also a vindication of democracy that they had nurtured over a long time. Indeed the freedom movement was a movement preparing the people for a parliamentary form of government as distinct from the system that preceded the British and was practised by them also for a long time.

The people of a liberated nation, even the most reflective among them, are likely to exaggerate their freedom struggle and magnify its scope. But when this subjective urge is surfeited, the mind's eye turns to the cold, objective analysis to produce a history acceptable to reason. During British rule, there were many but sporadic manifestations of grievances in the army, in the people's economic life and elsewhere. It will not be right to include them in the freedom movement because they neither arose from political exhortations nor left a contributary effect on the movement. The post-independence Government of India gathered together a number of writers of history to prepare an exhaustive account of the freedom movement. They applied themselves to an intensive research and made the entire period beginning with Plassey their field. Some politicians, not accustomed to exercising the discrimination of the historian between

what is objective and what is subjective, between what is historically relevant and what is not, were also associated with the project. Objectivity was no doubt honestly the aim, but in the peculiar atmosphere, instead of being critical they became credulous and the scope of the movement was extended to all manner of outbursts against the then Government. Most of them can easily be excluded from a work on the freedom movement; if they are discussed here, it is merely in order to clear the ground.

There was a mutiny at Vellore in 1806. Its cause was an innocuous order. The army officers of the Madras Presidency felt that the distinctive caste mark, which the Indian soldier bore on his brow, marred his martial appearance as did his untrimmed moustaches or the flowing beard. Without meaning any offence to religion an order was issued asking moustaches to be trimmed and beards to be shaved. The order also asked for the traditional Indian turban to be replaced by one with a leather cockade. The mark on the brow indicated the Hindu's caste or creed; the beard the Muslim wore was a mark of religious observance. Both therefore interpreted the order as an attack on their religions. This suspicion was confirmed by the prescribed use of the leather cockade which could have been made of cow hide or pig skin, the former being offensive to the religious susceptibilities of Hindus and the latter of Muslims. Feelings ran high and boiled over into a mutiny among the troops. It was suppressed and the rebels were severely punished, but the "obnoxious" regulations were withdrawn. What the rebels gained from the mutiny was the undisturbed continuance of their superstitions; there was nothing in it of political or economic value to their country or to themselves.

Eighteen years later, a supposed fear of injury to religious superstitions again provoked disobedience in a section of the Indian army. When war broke out in Burma in 1824, the soldiers stationed at Barrackpore near Calcutta were ordered to sail to Rangoon. They protested saying that the crossing of sea was forbidden by their religious custom and that if they obeyed the order they would be excommunicated. They also argued that the terms of their appointment did not provide for oversea service. The protest was angrily dismissed as sheer nonsense by

the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Edward Page, who marched in person to Barrackpore, and admonishing the troops asked them either to sail or lay down their arms. They did not yield, and Sir Edward instantly ordered fire. Some fell dead and some were hanged. The regiment was disbanded.

Several times there were manifestations of rebellious temper over breaches of promise about extra allowances. The soldiers were persuaded to march to distant places on the promise of extra allowances, and when payment was denied in conjunction with threats and exhibitions of racial arrogance by British officers, they turned their guns in anger towards the officers. All such activities were ruthlessly suppressed; but the suppression was often followed by reconciliation and better treatment.

During the first hundred years of British rule (since 1757), the even tenor of the administration had been disturbed about two dozen times by local upheavals, limited in scope and caused either by extraordinary economic distress or by the ambitions or contumacity of some local feudal chief. Following the ceding of Midnapore to the British by Mir Kasim in 1760, the Raja of Dhalbhum (1769-74), instead of paying land revenue to the Company, raised a rebellion which was put down. The Raja and also his brother, who was put in possession of the estate after his predecessor had been deposed, showed valour without wisdom. With a few acres of semi-independent territory in the big province of Bengal completely under the Company's rule, how could they hope to hold their own against the British?

Almost similar were the causes of several other rebellions. Ganga Narain, the leader of the Bhumij resurrection in Manbhum (1832) was a disappointed claimant to the Barabhum estate and managed to gather some men to threaten to enforce his claim. His was again a desperate attempt and it was frustrated. The biggest rebellion of the feudal chieftains was the Bundela rising of 1842. After successive British demands for payment of land rvenue had been defied by Jawahar Singh Bundela of Chandrapur and Madhukar Shah of Narhut, civil court decrees were obtained by the authorities and the defaulters were threatened with attachment of their property. They defied the attachment order also, attacked the police, killing some of them, and raised a standard of revolt, the tenants having been mobilis-

ed into an armed force. As if it were going to be a successful bid to prevent for good the British from collecting land revenues, a number of other landlords and Gond leaders also came under the banner of Chandrapur and Narhut. There was prolonged action lasting up to April 1843, in which month the defiant forces were completely worsted.

The Paik rebellion of Orissa (1817), the revolt of Daya Ram of Hathras in the same year, the Bareilly rising of 1816, the Kol rebellion of 1831, the Gadkari rising of Kolhapur in 1844, were all either in the nature of resistance to the land revenue demands or to what was regarded as usurpation of private lands.

The Revolt of 1857 was no doubt an attempt to drive out the British and to restore to power either the Mughal rule or the different local chiefs from whom the British had seized it. But this attempt was irreconcilably different from the one which began in the post-Revolt years and continued, while changing its shape and form, up to the early 1940s. The latter attempt was an attempt to gain power for the people, to establish democracy. It succeeded, while the former failed. Naturally therefore only that movement or those movements must be regarded as part of the freedom struggle whose object was the establishment, step by step, of democracy and withdrawal of British rule. The Revolt of 1857 is a separate subject by itself. It is like the other preceding wars between the Indian ruling chiefs and the British. There may be force in the contention of some that the Mutiny or the Revolt of 1857 was the first war for Indian independence; but this is not the proper place to go into the subject. For the present work, the post-1857 movements with the earlier background are the only relevant subject-matter. The movements began with petitioning to the British Government for political reforms.*

* In my book, *British Rule in India—An Assessment*, I have dealt with India's economic degeneration under British Rule, which created an urge in Indians for a share in the government of their country.

2

The Early Petitioners

When and how did Indians conceive the idea of petitioning to the British Parliament for political reforms leading to the establishment of representative institutions is an important question to anyone trying to find out what the initial steps in India's struggle for freedom were. The shape of an idea is generally a reflection of things around the man who conceives it; he thinks ahead and tries to change them. On October 31, 1851 an organization called the British Indian Association was formed at Calcutta. It was not a wholly new organization; what made it different from its former self was its new spirit. It had taken its birth in 1837 under the name of the Zemindary Association; it was created primarily to protect the class interests of the landlords. The membership of the Association consisted of upper class Indians and non-official Englishmen. But Englishmen later decided to withdraw from it for two reasons: (1) In 1850 the Government of India took certain steps to protect poor peasants from the terrorising behaviour of European indigo and tea planters, and since some of those supporting the cause of the peasants were members of the Zemindary Association, the Englishmen thought that they could derive little advantage from the Association. (2) Ever since British rule began in India a legal anomaly had existed: Englishmen charged with crimes could be tried only by the Supreme Court at Calcutta, and not, like Indians, at the place of the commission of crime. When the Governor-General decided to get rid of the anomaly and published Bills to amend the old law, the English community was in uproar. They said they would not agree to trials of Englishmen by Indian judges. (There were Indian judges in districts, while the Supreme Court consisted wholly of Englishmen.)

Their protests prevailed and the Bills were dropped. In the controversy that raged over the Bills, Indians and Englishmen of the Association were again divided.

This development led to a change in the attitude of the Indian members, and thinking that the interests of Indians and Englishmen would always clash on vital matters, they set up, as stated above, a new organization. That the change was good for Indian interests became evident in a year. The year (1853), when the Charter of the East India Company would have to be renewed, was approaching and a review of the Company's administration was shortly to be taken up by Parliament. On this occasion the Association decided to submit a petition to Parliament. The petition demanded, among other things, that the legislature of India should be a body not only distinct from the persons in whom the executive powers are vested but also possessing a popular character so as, in some respects, to represent the sentiments of the people and to be so looked upon by them. The exact content of the demand was: a Legislative Council should be constituted at Calcutta composed of 17 members, three selected from the 'most respectable and qualified inhabitants' of each Presidency; one member should be appointed by the Governor of each Presidency from among the senior civil officers and one by the Crown to preside over the Council, quite independent of the control of the Government.

The British Indian Association was the first body to examine the political and economic consequences of British rule. In its petition it surveyed quite comprehensively the whole field of administration and offered suggestions for improvement. The Association protested that 'though the revenue raised by the Company both from the land and from other sources far exceeds what was drawn from the country by its Mohammedan rulers, a very inadequate portion of it is devoted to improvements in the means of land and water communications'. It strongly objected to the support given to 'bishops and other highly-paid functionaries out of the general revenue of the country, especially when the Government of the East India Company was for a mixed 'community, the members of which are of opposite sects and the majority composed of Hindus and Mohammedans'. It criticised the judicial system, the civil and criminal procedure,

the police and the magistracy, and demanded abolition of the Company's trade monopolies, particularly of the salt trade.

The British Indian Association was not an all-India body, nor could it be called a popular organization of the people of Bengal. It was unthinkable in that age that landlords should associate themselves with commoners. Similarly unthinkable was a popularly elected Legislative Council. Even the House of Commons did not then have a single representative of any class except the possessing and employing classes. Up to 1867 the British Government was a government of an oligarchy. All that the Association could think of was a few seats for Indians of the upper classes in the Legislative Council of the Governor-General and those of the Governors. The administration was carried on by the Governor-General with the aid of his Executive Council and the legislative business was transacted by his Legislative Council, which consisted of the Executive Councillors and a few others. The members of the two Councils were all Europeans—Indians were conspicuous by their absence. Similar executive and legislative structure existed in the provinces. The only reform that could be visualised of this set-up and in that age was that the Legislative Councils should have a few Indian members to be selected by the Governor-General or the Governors.

The East India Company was still adding to its Indian Empire, and what mattered to it in India was the Indian princes whom it was fighting and subduing one after another. There had been, under the Company's employ in India, a number of British officials who had endeavoured to be sympathetic and helpful to Indians, but the one overriding notion that the Company's masters and servants would not readily cast away was that the British were overlords in India and, therefore, Indians could not be associated with any branch of the administration without their pleasure. That being the mental attitude, the demand of the British Indian Association was not responded to. When even the princes with their strong armed forces had been humbled, what right had a petty organization, like the British Indian Association, to be heard in a spirit of responsiveness! This fact, however, cannot minimise the importance of the Association: it was one of those first steps which were in the years to come to shift the focus of political affairs from the princes to the people

Among those constituting the first steps can be reckoned the Bengal British India Society, the Kalyan Unnayak Mandal of Poona, the Bombay Association, Indian languages newspapers, etc.

The Bengal British India Society which did not last long and which too was not an all-India body, had been established on April 20, 1943. It charged itself with the task of collecting and disseminating 'information relating to the actual condition of the people of British India and the laws and institutions and resources of the country and to employ such other means of a peaceable and lawful character as may appear calculated to secure the welfare and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subject'. The Society decided, quite understandably, to adopt and recommend to Government only such measures 'as are consistent with pure loyalty to the person and government of the reigning sovereign of the British Dominions and the due observance of the laws and regulations of this country'. It emphatically stated that it 'shall discountenance every effort to subvert legal authority or disturb the peace and well-being of the society'.[1]

The Kalyan Unnayak Mandal was, in its aims and objects, somewhat ahead. It drew up a Charter of Rights for presentation to the British Parliament. Gopalrao Deshmukh, commonly called Lokahitwadi (people's well-wisher), was the leading luminary of the Mandal. (His father had fallen in the battlefield fighting for the last Peshwa.) Gopalrao had taken up a judicial post under the British, but evinced a keen interest in politics with a view to promoting his country's constitutional advance. He carried on his agitation singlehanded through the columns of *Prabhakar*, a leading Marathi journal. There is much evidence in his writing of political sagacity, almost prophetic. In the paper's issue dated April 1, 1849, he wrote under the title 'The Effect of British Rule' that a time would come when the people of India would become politically and culturally so strong that the British Government would be compelled to quit. He was half a century ahead of his time and advocated the establishment of small industries. In one of his articles he plainly suggested that imports of foreign

[1] *Raja Rajendralal Mitra's Speeches, p. 25*

goods should be stopped even if the people had to wear coarse cloth.

The Bombay Association owed its birth to a democratic process. On August 26, 1852 a meeting of the 'native inhabitants' (the Indians were so called by the ruling class) was held in the room of the Elphinstone Institute, and on the same evening was inaugurated, mainly through the efforts of Jagannath Shankershet the first political association in the Presidency of Bombay. It was named the Bombay Association. Presiding over the meeting Shankarshet said: 'We meet here today to consider a most important subject. In the newspapers, a notice was printed convening a public meeting of the native inhabitants of Bombay, which I shall read. From this you will see that it is considered highly desirable to form an association in Bombay to ascertain and note the wants and wishes of the people living under this Government to consider what measures are calculated to improve their condition; and to submit the results of these inquiries to the local Government and to the authorities in England. By these means it is hoped, under Providence, that we may be able to suggest a great many things to our rulers which otherwise may pass unnoticed… .The grand aim of the meeting at which I am called to preside is to secure the happiness of millions of our countrymen.'

In May 1853 'the members of the Bombay Association and other native inhabitants of the Presidency of Bombay' submitted a 'humble petition' to 'the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled'. It was a very long petition. The petition, after narrating that the administrative matters relating to Indians were treated with utter carelessness and extreme secretiveness, demanded that the 'Council as at present constituted be abolished and in its place be created 'an useful and efficient Council of which the judges of the Supreme Court and some of the European and native citizens should form part'. It demanded for Indians a share in Government services and said: 'At present the natives of this country, however respectable, trustworthy and qualified they may be, are excluded from the higher grade of judicial and revenue situations and from the regular medical service to which covenanted European Servants sent out from England are alone appointed…. Your

petitioners respectfully reiterate their prayer that...natives of India may be allowed to fill all situations for which they may be qualified. By the adoption and practical operation of such a measure...a great deal of discontent will be removed.'[2]

In Madras the beginning of the expression of public opinion is traced to the Presidency branch of the British Indian Association, which was started at the instance of the Association's secretary, Debendranath Tagore, who had addressed a letter to certain prominent men of Madras suggesting to them, in the context of the 'approaching termination of the East India Company's Charter', that it 'would have greater weight if representations were made simultaneously by the natives of every part of British India or by a society having just pretensions to represent them'. The objects the Presidency branch set before it were: 'to advance the common interests of Great Britain and India, and to ameliorate the condition of the native inhabitants of the subject country'.

In the pre-Revolt decades the foundation had been laid for a class of English-knowing Indians to grow. They belonged to the class of landlords, whose interests had been closely linked with those of the British in India. They began to draw their inspiration from the British and developed an aspiration for higher posts under the Government. They knew that Indians were discriminated against by the British rulers and that under Muslim rule Hindus were not completely shut out; and yet they did not allow themselves to be provoked because they knew that the British were too powerful to be intimidated. They prayed that Indians be included in Government service of higher grades. Indians (the leading man among them being Raja Rammohun Roy) and not the Company's Government had first urged English education to be introduced in India. The Government was in fact afraid that such an introduction might be opposed by Indians, and it took some years to agree to it. It was on September 29, 1830 that the Court of Directors of the Company asked the Government of Bengal 'to introduce English as the language of public business in all its departments and to

2 Quoted in *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Collected from Bombay Government Records) Vol. I. 1818-85 (1957), p. 146

begin...corresponding in English with all native princes or persons of ranks who are known to understand that language, or to have persons about them who understand it'.

English was now becoming not only the medium of Government business but also of instruction in schools, and with the faith of the people growing that the British had come to stay as rulers, they naturally aspired for higher jobs, some of those jobs which had been exclusively reserved for Europeans. In the history of the freedom struggle this aspiration has a definite place, for the process that gradually led to freedom began first with the partial Indianization of the services and was then extended to the legislative wing of the Government. That is the reason why Raja Rammohun Roy is adored as the pioneer of political movements in India. His attitude vis-a-vis the British Government may be summed up thus: we accept you as rulers and you accept us as subjects with all the responsibility a ruler owes to his subjects. The Raja was an erudite scholar; he enriched his Indian learning with a knowledge of the political system of advanced countries of Europe. The western concept of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity had so much impressed itself on his mind that (while on his voyage to England) sighting a French ship flying the flag of liberty, he insisted on going on board the French ship to pay homage on behalf of India to the French nation which had raised aloft the banner of revolution against all forms of slavery. While going to the French ship he slipped and injured his leg badly, remaining lame for the rest of his life. In the 1820s he fought singlehanded against the restrictions placed on the Indian Press. His argument in effect was: if the Crown's subjects in Britain had a free Press, why should those in India be deprived of it. It was this approach which inspired his various representations to the British on behalf of Indians. For example, when the Jury Act of 1827 was in the form of a Bill, he protested that 'natives, either Hindu or Mohammedan are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians either Europeans or native, while Christians, including native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Mussulman juror however high he may stand in the estimation of society. This Bill also denies both to Hindus and Mohammedans the honour of a seat

on the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow-Hindus or Mussulmans. This is the sum total of the Bill of which we bitterly complain'.

When the Company's Charter was under consideration of Parliament in 1833, the Raja submitted several communications to the Board of Control, advocating Indianization of the British-Indian army, trial by jury, separation of the offices of judge and magistrate, codification of civil and criminal laws, inclusion of Indians in executive services. It was difficult for the British to counter, with any valid argument, the Raja's demand for the abolition of discrimination between the British subjects and the Indian subjects of the Crown, and Parliament, while renewing the Company's Charter in 1833, laid down that 'no native shall by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place or employment' under the Company. The Company however deliberately flouted Parliament's order. Believing that the order was meant to be given effect to, several Indians went to London and duly qualified for the Civil Service but were not appointed to that service. The disappointment thus caused agitated many English-educated Indians, and when the question of the renewal of the Charter again came up twenty years later, they organized their voice of protest (as already stated) and requested Parliament not to renew the Company's Charter and to place the Indian administration under direct control of the Crown. The voice was perhaps regarded insignificant, and although in 1853 the declaration of 1833 was repeated, it remained a dead letter until 1864 when one Indian was appointed to the Civil Service whose strength was 916, all Europeans.

There was nothing extraordinary in this behaviour of the British ruling class. It had already developed a tradition of first rejecting or side-tracking popular demands and then yielding to them bit by bit. Compared to the popular movements in Britain in the first half of the 19th century, Indian ventilation of the feelings of educated people was a very feeble demonstration. Beginning with the People's Charter Movement of 1838, the British people made their strength felt by the rulers by means of constant agitation and riots. The people held mammoth meetings and carried on their campaign through the Press,

popular songs, poems, etc. The petition presented by them to Parliament in 1839 was signed by 1,286,000 and that presented in 1842 was said to have been signed by three million people. The petitions were rejected, but they became the foundation stone of the edifice of the people's rights, and the rulers had eventually to yield. The same process was repeated in India. Dadabhai Naoroji had this aspect of British political life in mind when he told his people again and again that there should be agitation and more agitation to secure fulfilment of popular demands. He picked up the thread left by Raja Rammohun Roy, and in 1855 started a campaign in England demanding that the competitive examination for recruitment to the Indian Civil Service should be held simultaneously in London and Delhi. There was no result, but the campaign did not let up.

Paradoxically, some of the British rulers wanted Indian constitutional agitation to take a proper shape and grow. It will be apt to borrow Charles E. Trevelyan's following words written as far back as 1838:

> As long as the natives are left to brood over their former independence, their sole specific for improving their condition is the immediate and total expulsion of the English. A native patriot of the old school has no notion of anything beyond this; his attention has never been called to any other mode of restoring the dignity and prosperity of his country. It is only by the infusion of European ideas that a new direction can be given to the national view. The young men brought up at our seminaries turn with contempt from the barbarous despotism under which their ancestors groaned, to the prospect of improving their national institutions on the English model. Instead of regarding us with dislike, they court our society and look upon us as their natural protectors and benefactors.... So, far from having the idea of driving the English into the sea uppermost in their minds, they have no notion of any improvement but such as rivets their connection with the English and makes them dependent on English protection and instruction.... The existing connection between two such distant countries as England and India, cannot, in the

nature of things, be permanent; no effort of policy can prevent the natives from ultimately regaining their independence. But there are two ways of arriving at this point. One of these is through the medium of revolution; the other through that of reform. In one, the forward movement is sudden and violent; in the other, it is gradual and peaceable. One must end in a complete alienation of mind and separation of interests between ourselves and the natives; the other is a permanent alliance, founded on mutual benefit and good-will.

The only means at our disposal for preventing the one and securing the other class of results is to set the natives on a process of European improvement, to which they are already sufficiently inclined.... The political education of a nation must be a work of time; and while it is in progress, we shall be as safe as it will be possible for us to be. The natives will not rise against us, because we shall stoop to raise them: there will be no reaction, because there will be no pressure: the national activity will be fully and harmlessly employed in acquiring and diffusing European knowledge, and in naturalising European institutions. The educated classes, knowing that the elevation of their country on these principles can only be worked out under our protection, will naturally cling to us.[3]

A clearer analysis of the then Indian situation is not to be found in any contemporary work. The British had become the strongest power in India; both the princes and people were terror-stricken. But terror cannot be a permanent feature of any government, and it is not always possible for a foreign ruler to keep the spirit for independence permanently suppressed. A wise foreign ruler can by clever policies prolong the period of his stay; in the case of the British, the stay could have been prolonged only by the policy suggested by Trevelyan. Apparently, the British rulers of India did not benefit by his wise words, and instead of 'stooping to raise the natives,' they ignored them, they banged the doors of high posts against

[3] Charles E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* pp. 190-94

them, they did not consult them while framing laws for them. And the result was the mighty Revolt of 1857. Part of the Revolt, which can rightly be depreciated as the Indian soldiers' mutiny, may have been solely provoked by what was supposed to be interference with religion, but the masses participating in it were extremely conscious of the disastrous economic effect of British rule and were happy that a positive action was at last being taken to turn out the British.

The Revolt failed, but it brought home several realizations. The British realized that in violence they were superior to Indians; the Indians realized that they were a divided people, some siding with the British and some helping the Revolt, and that the organization they brought into being was not capable of bringing under its wings distant parts of the country; the princes who helped the British were confirmed in their belief that British power was too strong to be subdued; the English-educated Indians realized more firmly that petitioning to the good sense of the rulers was the only possible way to secure Indians' association with the governing institutions. Terror was let loose by the rulers with the plain object of parading British might, but when the equilibrium of mind returned, they grew conscious of their past mistakes. The terrible events of the Revolt brought home to them 'the dangers arising from the entire exclusion of Indians from association with the legislation of the country'. Even men like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who were during the Revolt their most loyal enlightened supporters, pointed out the two-fold character of this danger. Almost simultaneously, the realization dawned on many Englishmen. Sir Bartle Frere, a member of the Governor-General's Legislative Council said that it was not wise 'to legislate for millions of people with few means of knowing except by rebellion, whether the laws suit them or not'.

The greatest good that the Revolt did to the Indian people was that most Governors-General apprehended the prospect of violence being organized by the people against British rule and loss being caused to British life and property; fear was more effective than the actual organization of violence. Thinking politicians of Britain advised the Queen to make a depar-

ture from the old way, and she made a Proclamation announcing that her 'subjects of whatever race or creed will be freely and impartially admitted to office in our services, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge'. Even the failure of a revolt is, to a degree, a success to its organizers: they succeed in paralysing the governmental machinery for a while and in making the rulers tremble in their seats. Man by nature wants peace, and a ruler cannot function without it. After the Revolt of 1857 the British were afraid not so much of the princes as of the people.

In Britain the people were then represented in Parliament by men of wealth and the landed aristocracy. Therefore, in accordance with the spirit of the Queen's Proclamation, the Governor-General began inviting three or four Rajas living in the neighbourhood of Calcutta to meet him and his European colleagues at the Legislative Council and express their opinion on the contemplated legislation, 'as a formal renunciation of the exclusiveness of alien rule'. In Madras and Bombay, 'chiefs of secondary ranks' were 'in like manner invited to confer with the Governors'.[4]

The informal method of consulting Indians was given a legal form in 1861, when Parliament promulgated the Indian Councils Act and the Indian Courts Act. The Viceroy's law-making body was enlarged to include 'not less than six nor more than twelve additional members'. The Act did not specifically provide for inclusion of Indians, but to the first Legislative Council constituted under the Act in 1862, three members of the Indian aristocracy (the Maharaja of Patiala, the Raja of Benares and Sir Dinkar Rao) were nominated by the Viceroy. The Indian Courts Act made Indians eligible for appointment to High Court judgeships.

These achievements were like collecting drops of water for an ocean. A whole nation lay prostrate at the feet of the British after the Revolt and after the inhuman reprisals that followed it.

What were the Indians to do now? And what were the

[4] W. M. Torrens, M. P., *Empire in Asia*, p. 402

British to do? Violence stood discredited, and so did the men who organized it, although the deeds of their bravery continued to be sung for a hundred years. On the other hand were those English-educated Indians who had taken to the way of petitioning. If the future had to be made smooth, they must be made to look to constitutional progress as the only way of India's redemption. Educated people in all countries are looked upon as leaders of the masses, and in India the English-educated men, as different from Sanskrit and Persian scholars, were being regarded as superior to the latter, and their eyes were fixed on the slow constitutional advance under the British Crown. The Legislative Council created by the Indian Councils Act of 1861 merely gave a small minority of seats to Indians, and their advice could be rejected by the Viceroy without assigning any reason. It was enough, in the circumstances of that age, that Indians were made members of a council to which they had no access for a hundred years, ever since the Company occupied Bengal, and it was enough that a few Indians were promoted to the High Court Judgeships, access to which also had all along been denied to Indians.

Again to borrow Trevelyan's expression, 'the revolution as the medium of regaining independence had yielded place to one through that of reform'. Therefore the 'forward movement,' which in the case of the former 'is sudden and violent,' was a lost opportunity; the movement was now to be 'gradual and peaceable'. A long road—the destination being 90 years away—had to be taken. The Act of 1861 was the first milestone on that road.

3

Beginnings of A People's Movement

THE MEN of constitutional agitation took 30 years to reach the next stage—the Indian Councils Act of 1892—on the road to freedom. The political history of these years may be regarded as the story of the freedom movement of the period.

The pre-Revolt organizations had gone into oblivion. The British Indian Association was still breathing, but it was so much alarmed by the Revolt and its consequences that it renounced politics and confined itself to protecting the interests of the landed aristocracy. It degenerated, it seems, into utter selfishness. In 1859 it submitted a petition to Parliament demanding extension of Permanent Settlement, a system ruinous to the peasant, to the whole of British India. It argued in the petition that the Revolt and the disturbances following it had well established 'the political advantage of a body of permanently settled zemindars over the class of superior proprietors of land who, under various denominations with various rights, are to be found in all the unsettled provinces. A comparison of the loyal and the disloyal throughout the late period of crisis will at least show the tendency of a Permanent Settlement to create a powerful class, who feel their interests as one with the ruling power, who are satisfied with their position; it shows that the opposite system has an exactly opposite tendency and result.'

But more powerful organs soon appeared on the scene. The one deserving the first place was the Press. In all movements in the democratic world, the Press has usually been the forerunner; it had been so in Britain in the 19th century; it had been so in India, which was emulating the British pattern of politics. But the Press in India had suffered from different

kinds of restraints at different times; an unfree country could not enjoy a wholly free Press. Even Englishmen, the pioneers of the Press in India, were restrained whenever their writings were regarded as offensive by the authorities. In 1817 Lord Hastings had abolished the censorship to which journals were subject, but in 1823 the temporary Governor-General, John Adam, imposed a more severe censorship upon the entire Press, both Anglo-Indian and Indian. The first victims of the Press Ordinance were two Englishmen, the editor and the assistant editor of the *Calcutta Journal*, who had criticised Government to an extent intolerable to the Governor-General. The editor was deported from India on two months' notice and the assistant editor was arrested in his office and put on board an England-going vessel. Twenty years later, another acting Governor-General, Charles Metcalfe, released the Press from all control save that of ordinary law of libel and sedition. It was a bold step taken contrary to the advice given by an official adviser, Thomas Munro, who had argued that a free Press and an autocratic government were incompatible. Munro had posed a question and answered it himself: 'What is the first duty of a free Press? It is to deliver the country from a foreign yoke.' During the Revolt and the emergency following it, the Press was again gagged, but was allowed, when normalcy returned, to enjoy a considerable measure of freedom for about fifteen years.

These fifteen years are memorable in the history of the Indian Press. Quite a considerable section of it functioned like an opposition political party in a democratic country; it provoked the politically conscious educated people to give themselves a political organization. It will be worthwhile to quote extracts from some of the articles published in the editorial columns of the Indian language Press.

The *Khandesh Waibhav* of October 22, 1875 wrote:

> On reading the histories of all the kingdoms which flourished before this time, one finds that those were the best which were conducted with the consent of the people. Of the states which now exist on the surface of the earth those which are governed with the consent of

> their people are found to be in the best condition. In the United States of America there is no king. The Government is conducted with the voice of the people and is therefore in the best condition of all the Governments of the earth. The people govern themselves and therefore such laws as are beneficial to themselves are enacted.... It would appear plain that the people should have the right of governing (themselves), for it is but proper that those whose money is to be spent should have the right of spending it.... In India the British Government alone rules supremely in all matters from the most trifling to those of great political importance. We are not consulted in the least in anything.... If our interests interfere with those of Government, the former are entirely set aside without caring in the least howsoever great a damage is done to our people.... We continue to complain pitifully and they continue to kick us. The more we bend the more they press us down. This is the course the British Government has adopted at present towards the Hindus.... It is well understood that we never get justice at the hands of the English Government if we act meekly. A force can be overcome only by a greater force. Without it everything is in vain. This the British Government itself teaches us.

The Shivaji of April 10, 1875 gave the people the following advice as to how they should behave during the 'approaching visit of the Prince of Wales':

> The people should spend nothing in giving welcome to their future Emperor. They should undoubtedly wait on His Royal Highness, but should say nothing to him but what refers to the manifold grievances under which they are groaning. The Prince should hear nothing but complaints wherever he goes. No rejoicing should be made on the occasion. The authorities may make grand darbars, grand military reviews, illuminations, etc., but the people should manifest nothing but the misery and wretchedness under which they are suffering. The people are very poor already, and they should not add to their poverty by

spending what little they have on useless and empty shows.

The *Maharashtra Mitra* of June 17, 1875:

> Education has no doubt spread to a considerable extent in the country. But what sort of education is it? It is calculated to prepare clerks and writers, that is, men fit only to serve. The consequence is that there are too many men in the country ready to serve and too little service to employ them. There are too many to recite history, but none who can enact history.... The English Government is perhaps the most partial government India ever had. In short, no rulers who have ever ruled India have injured this country as it has been injured by the English rulers.

In its January 1878 issue the *Swatantrata* made the following caustic observations:

> When the unbounded wealth of our country is carried away by foreigners by cowardly efforts, when eminent persons like Lord Salisbury make secret endeavours not to give (to people) appointments like those in the civil services, when selfish persons like Sir John Strachey with the view of running this country, drown poor harmless and weak people in a bottomless ocean of misery by suggesting plans for the imposition of oppressive taxes like the income tax and the licence tax, when a wise but selfish and not discriminating Viceroy like Lord Lytton gives his consent (to the same), when Government pass an act on every day and oppress people, when an improper tax is levied on an article like salt, when people whom self-interest has blinded close the way to (the introduction of) arts and industries, when we cannot obtain our rights in time, when the yoke of oppression is put on us as if we were helpless slaves, should we not become independent for our rights? How long shall we suffer ourselves to remain in this dependent condition? The misery arising from being in a state of dependence is very

painful. This state of dependence cannot now be endured. The things have gone to extremes. Friends, this slavery cannot be endured. Swatantrata (freedom) is the mansion of success and happiness.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was ahead of most of its contemporaries, and in one of its issues in 1875 it suggested, while commenting on the alleged attempt of the Gaekwar of Baroda to murder the English Resident, Colonel Phayre, at his court, 'that surely to poison an obscure Colonel is by far a lighter crime' than 'to emasculate a nation that the Government may rule without trouble'.

In 1878 the Indian language Press was again gagged by a new legislation called the Vernacular Press Act. The Legal Member of the Government of India made the following observations while speaking on the new legislation proposed by him:

There is a large and increasing class of native newspapers which would seem to exist only for the sake of spreading seditious principles, of bringing the Government and its European officers into contempt, and of exciting antagonism between the governing race and the people of the country. This description of writing is not of very recent growth, but there has been a marked increase in it of late, and especially during the last three or four years. During the past twelve months, it has been worse than ever, the writers gaining in boldness as they find that their writings are allowed to pass unpunished. Their principal topics are the injustice and tyranny of the British Government, its want of consideration towards its native subjects, and the insolence and pride of Englishmen in India, both official and non-official. There is no crime however heinous and no meanness however vile, which according to these writers, is not habitually practised by their English rulers... .

Of late a further step has been taken and a beginning has been made in the direction of inciting the people to upset the British Raj by denunciation, sometimes open and sometimes covert, of the alleged weakness and timi-

dity of the English, their inability to maintain their present position in India.'

The Vernacular Press Act was a drastic measure. It empowered the magistrates to require, with the previous sanction of the Provincial Government, editors of the papers published in oriental languages either to submit the proofs of the matter to be printed for censorship, or to give a bond not to print anything calculated to bring the Government into discredit or excite hatred between different races. Government already had power to do all this in the notorious Section 124-A which was inserted in the Indian Penal Code in 1870. It provided: 'Whoever, by words either spoken or intended to be read, or by signs or by visible representation, or otherwise excites or attempts to excite, feelings of disaffection towards Her Majesty or the Government established by law in British India shall be punished with transportation for life or any shorter term, to which a fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine.' But since this section could be called into operation only after the 'crime' had been committed a preventive measure was considered necessary, and it was given to the magistracy by the Vernacular Press Act. The immediate effect was the closing down of several papers which had played a notable part in national awakening. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* circumvented the Act by changing its language from Bengali to English.

After the Revolt the number of newspapers had been increasing, and they were producing a good deal of anti-Government feeling. Lord Lytton was then Viceroy of India. His term of office was a period of extreme discontent which had resulted from his own economic and political policies. He accelerated the speed of the crushing roller of exploitation, which had already been moving quite fast. 'During the last twelve years', according to the Bombay Association's petition to the House of Commons (dated March 29, 1871), 'the salt tax has been raised 100 per cent in Madras, 81 per cent in Bombay and 50 per cent in other parts of India; the duty on sugar and the Abkari or excise on spirits, 100 per cent; the

stamp duty has been repeatedly revised and enhanced, and is now so vexatious and excessive as frequently to lead to a denial of justice; heavy court fees and a succession tax of 2 per cent have been imposed; a local land cess of 6½ per cent; village service cess at the same high rate, rural town cess, taxes on trades and callings, house-tax, tolls; and a considerable variety of municipal and local rates and taxes, amounting in the aggregate to an extremely large and oppressive sum, have been levied in different parts of the country. It is now proposed to impose fresh local taxes to supply the deficiency caused by the conduct of the Government of India in curtailing the grant of several Provincial Services. Over-taxation has for many years of British Rule been the bane of India; and that strenuous endeavours have not been made by the authorities to reduce the public expenditure, which has been increased from year to year, until the augmentation now amounts to the vast sum of 19 millions over and above the expenditure of 1856-57.'

The economic condition of the people had been fast deteriorating. It further deteriorated during the rule of Lord Lytton, who had assumed the charge of the Viceroyalty in 1776. The country was seething with discontent. At that time two eminent Englishmen, both officials, who in later years were closely associated with India's political awakening and aspirations, reported on the basis of the information in their possession that a revolt was being vigorously organized. They apprehended that 1857 might be repeated. These men were Allan Octavian Hume and William Wedderburn; the former is commonly known as Father of the Indian National Congress and the latter as one of the famous Congress presidents. Wedderburn, in his biography of A. O. Hume, says: 'About the years 1878 and 1879, economic in combination with political troubles were actively at work throughout India; the physical suffering of the many acted on by the intellectual discontent of the few, was rapidly bringing popular unrest to the danger point. For masses of the peasantry, scourged by poverty, famine, and pestilence, were beginning to give way to despair; they could not make their voices heard, and they saw no hope of relief. This critical condition of affairs was clearly

understood by Mr. Hume.'[1] Wedderburn then quotes Hume:

> Knowing the country and the people as I do—having been through something of the same kind, though on a small scale, in the Mutiny—and having convinced myself that the evidence of the then existing state of the proletariat was real and trustworthy, I could not then and do not now entertain a shadow of a doubt that we were then truly in extreme danger of a most terrible revolution. The evidence that convinced me, at the time (about fifteen months, I think, before Lord Lytton left) that we were in imminent danger of a terrible outbreak was this: I was shown seven large volumes (corresponding to a certain mode of dividing the country, excluding Burma, Assam, and some minor tracts) containing a vast number of entries; English abstracts or translations—longer or shorter—of vernacular reports or communications of one kind or another, all arranged according to districts (not identical with ours) sub-districts, sub-divisions, and the cities, towns and villages included in these. The number of these entries was enormous; there were said, at the time, to be communications from over thirty thousand different reporters...all going to show that these poor men were pervaded with a sense of hopelessness of the existing state of affairs; that they were convinced that they would starve and starve and die, and that they wanted to do *something*...that something meant violence.... In the existing state of the lowest half-starving classes, it was considered that the first few crimes would be the signal for hundreds of similar ones, and for a general development of lawlessness, paralysing the authorities and the respectable classes. It was considered certain also that everywhere the small bands would begin to coalesce into large ones, like drops of water on a leaf; that all the bad characters in the country would join, and that very soon after the bands attained formidable proportions, a certain small number of the educated classes, at the time desperately, perhaps unreasonably bitter against Government, would join the movement,

[1] W. Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume*, p. 2

> assume here and there the lead, and give the outbreak cohesion, and direct it as a national revolt.[2]

What happened to the preparations is not known; there was no revolt, and it can be inferred that while the preparations were still at an early stage, Government officers got information and the Government machinery was put into action to suppress them. It was towards the close of Lord Lytton's period of Viceroyalty that one Vasudeo Balwant Rao Phadke, a clerk in the Military Accounts Office at Poona, collected together some fighting men in the form of a small rebellious army which, he believed, would grow with the spread of the rebellion. He had been powerfully influenced by Ranade's lectures on economic deterioration of India under the British, and his hatred of the British developed into a spirit for revolt. With remarkable assiduity and personal suffering, he enrolled men, gave them arms and even committed dacoities to finance his project. But before he could do any positive harm to the British, he was arrested and prosecuted for collecting 'men, arms, ammunition with the intention of waging war against the Queen'. He was sentenced to transportation for life and sent away to Aden, where he was imprisoned in a solitary cell. For his attempt to run away from jail, he was put in fetters, and in four years died of T. B. He was 38 at the time of his death.

It will be incorrect to assume, on the basis of reactions and outbursts flowing from Lord Lytton's policies, that a violent movement of great magnitude would have come into existence had the preparations referred to by Hume not become known or had Vasudev not been arrested prematurely, or that it would have ended British rule in India. But the British realized, as any ruler would realize, that the continuing discontent and unrest would be a constant source of anxiety to Government, and that if it was not assuaged, they might be faced with a dangerous situation. The danger was not imminent but could appear at any time in future. The British Government therefore took some positive steps in the next few years to channel the people's attention from violence to constitutional remedies and from despair to hope. Lord Lytton was asked to resign, and Lord

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 79-81

Ripon was appointed to the Governor-Generalship early in 1880.

On assuming office Ripon announced, on the authority of the British Government, that Indians should have some measure of local self-government—local bodies should be self-governing institutions as far as possible. The Resolution published by his Government in May 1882 said that the local boards should consist of a large majority of non-official members and be presided over by non-official chairmen. Lord Ripon instructed the Provincial Governors that while the ultimate supervision, control, and superintendence should be left in the hands of the respective Provincial Governments, the actual municipal administration should be entrusted to the elected representatives of the people. His instructions were, in part at least, disregarded by the Provincial Governments, and the non-official elected element was in some provinces not given the position and status envisaged for them, but by the measure with which he began his administration he made himself popular. He repealed the much-hated Vernacular Press Act and took some other steps to undo the mischief wrought by Lord Lytton. But he had his limitations and could do pretty little to mitigate the economic misery. He proposed that the state should have the right to increase land revenues, but the increase should be in proportion to the rise in the prices of the land produce. Before the proposal was finalised he relinquished his office, and a month after of his departure, the proposal was dropped.

For his supposedly pro-Indian views and measures his compatriots and colleagues made his life miserable, and he returned to his country an unhappy man. It was during his term paradoxically that educated Indians were shaken to the realization that it was almost impossible for them to retain their self-respect under British rule.

To understand this aspect of Ripon's rule, we shall have to go back to 1876 in which year a new organization, the Indian Association, was founded by Surendranath Banerjea. Banerjea was one of the first few Indians to be appointed to the Indian Civil Service. Hardly had he been in service a few years when the cunning of a clerk of his office landed him in trouble, and he was dismissed. (He had entered the Civil Service in Novem-

ber 1871.) He began, to use his own words, 'seriously to consider the advisability of forming an association to represent the views of the educated middle class community and inspire them with a living interest in public affairs'. He felt that the British Indian Association, being by its creed an association of landed aristocracy, could not give a lead for active political agitation. 'There was', to quote him again, 'the clear need for another political association on a more democratic basis, and the fact was recognized by the leaders of the British Indian Association.' And on July 26, 1876 the Indian Association was established. Banerjea set forth its ideals thus: (1) It would create a strong body of public opinion in the country; (2) It would unify the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations; (3) It would promote friendly feelings between Hindus and Mohammedans; and (4) It would approach the masses for participation in great public movements of the day. Later one of the leaders of the Association, describing its objects, said: 'Loyalty to British rule and agitation for a constitutional government are, as we have already stated, the two maxims which the Indian Association has always promulgated.'

Within a year of the formation of the Indian Association, Banerjea started a campaign to secure to Indians fair opportunities of entry into the Civil Service. The ground for the campaign was prepared by Lord Lytton. Like his other reactionary policies he made a proposal in 1877 to close the Indian Civil Service altogether to Indians and to create a 'close native service'. His proposal resulted in a different kind of harm to Indians: the age limit prescribed for candidates was reduced from 21 to 19 years as a device to cut short the number of Indians aspiring to appear at the competitive examination. For the same reason, the age limit had been reduced from 23 to 22 in 1860 and from 22 to 21 in 1866.

The Indian Association resolved to organize a national movement against British designs and made a beginning with a public meeting in Calcutta on March 24, 1877. The meeting decided to make efforts to bring the various Indian provinces upon a common platform and appointed Banerjea as its special delegate to visit the provinces. He entered upon the task with

alacrity and enthusiasm. Taking advantage of the summer vacation of the Metropolitan Institution, where he had been employed as a professor, he started for upper India with one Nagendra Nath Chatterjee, well known at the time as an eloquent speaker in the Bengali language. They first went to Agra where the Civil Service memorial, drawn up by the Indian Association, was translated into Urdu and lithographed for distribution among the people. Banerjea then proceeded to Lahore where he was received cordially by all sections of people, Hindus, Mohammedans and Sikhs. A crowded public meeting was held and the Calcutta resolution and the memorial were adopted. He utilized his Lahore visit for furthering the objectives of the Association, and a branch, called the Lahore Indian Association, was formed. 'It was, I believe', says Banerjea, 'the first political organization in the Punjab that provided a common platform for all sections of the Indian community.' In his whirlwind campaign, Banerjea visited Amritsar, Meerut, Allahabad, Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Aligarh, Benares, Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad and Poona, and aroused consciousness among the people about the objects of the Association and the immediate purpose of his visit. He visited Madras also, but for some reason, could not hold a public meeting there. For the first time in British India, some kind of a political link-up between different provinces was established so far as the people were concerned.

An all-India memorial on the Civil Service question was addressed to the House of Commons, and Lalmohan Ghose was selected as India's representative to proceed to England. Ghose possessed marvellous gifts of oratory. The first speech he made at a great meeting held at Willis Rooms under the presidentship of John Bright excited the admiration of all. The effect of the meeting was instantaneous. 'Within 24 hours of it, there were laid on the table of the House of Commons the rules creating what was subsequently known as the Statutory Civil Service.'

To return to the subject, the hostility provoked by Englishmen against Lord Ripon arose from an effect of the little progress in the recruitment of Indians to the Civil Service. In spite of the restriction on the age-limit, a number of Indians

were successful at the competitive examinations. They were appointed to the judicial branch of the Service; the executive branch was mostly manned by Europeans. By 1883 some of the Indian judicial officers reached a degree of seniority which entitled them to the posts of district and sessions judges. The law in force at that time forbade an Indian-born judge or magistrate to hear accusations against European residents except within the Presidency towns. It was argued on behalf of Indians that 'if this power is not conferred upon native members of the Civil Service, the anomaly may be presented of a European Joint Magistrate, who is subordinate to a native district magistrate or sessions judge, being empowered to try cases which his immediate superior cannot try. Native Presidency magistrates within the towns exercise the same jurisdiction over Europeans that they do over natives, and there seems to be no sufficient reason why covenanted native Civilians, with the position and training of a district magistrate or a sessions judge, should not exercise the jurisdiction over Europeans as is exercised by other members of the Service.'[3]

Ripon's Government decided to remove the anomaly. A Bill was drafted by the Law Member, Sir Courtney Ilbert, after whom it became known as the Ilbert Bill. Its object was to remove 'every judicial disqualification based merely on race distinction'. The tea and indigo planters, who subjected their Indian labourers to all manner of excesses, regarded the Bill as a personal wrong. They had virtually reintroduced slavery in India; they considered themselves above the law. Another 'object', therefore, of the Bill was, to quote Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, 'to put a stop to the impunity with which non-official Englishmen, principally of the planter class, ill-treated and, on occasions, even did to death their native servants'.[4]

The English merchants of Calcutta, though not affected directly by the Bill, were in their protests as violent as the planters. They boycotted Ripon's entertainments and even insulted him. The European community was so much agitated that some entered into a conspiracy 'to overpower the sentries

[3] Quoted in J. N. Gupta, *The Life and Work of Romesh Chandra Dutta,* p. 94

[4] W. S. Blunt, *India Under Ripon,* p. 5

of the Government House and to put the Viceroy on board a steamer at Chand Pal Ghat and send him to England via the Cape'. Some Europeans of Calcutta were quite serious about this plan. A campaign of protest was started and a Defence Association was formed with its headquarters at Calcutta and branches in different parts of the country. Subscriptions were raised for carrying on the campaign, and over Rs. 150,000 were collected. A meeting was held in the Calcutta Town Hall; the speeches made there 'were of an intemperance beyond all limits of decency. Similar meetings were held all over the Presidency and the Anglo-Indian Press, notably the *Englishman* became utterly hysterical. Volunteers were openly incited to resign *en masse* and certain persons even "sounded opinions in the Canteens"—in other words, attempted to seduce the army'.[5]

Lord Ripon was not personally responsible for the Bill. The proposal had originally come from the Government of Bengal; other Provincial Governments had expressed their approval and even the Secretary of State and his Council had given their consent. But Ripon was now the target of attack; he was perturbed. 'I am not sure', he said, 'I should have moved in the matter just now, had I supposed that Englishmen in India had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing since the days when they threatened to drown Macaulay in the Hooghly'.[6] He regretted that he 'let himself for this storm'. He had to yield to the rowdy Englishmen.

Now his Government proposed, again with the approval of the Secretary of State for India, that 'the extended powers should only be granted to Sessions Judges and District Magistrates and that the High Court should have power to transfer the hearing of a case from one court to another'.[7] The new proposal was announced in the Council, but it did not satisfy the English agitators, and Government had to stoop further. In 1884 a new Bill was passed which allowed Indian District Magistrates and Sessions Judges power to try European subjects on the condition that the European accused would have

[5] Lucien Wolf, *Life of Lord Ripon*, vol. II, p. 128
[6] *Ibid*, p. 136
[7] *Ibid*, p. 126

the right to demand trial by a jury half of which should consist of Europeans or Americans.

But the bitterness aroused in the Anglo-Indian community was not assuaged. Their hatred of Indians was now more pronounced than ever before. They scoffed at the idea of giving Indians any measure of self-government. They ridiculed Lord Ripon's self-government reform as ill-advised and impracticable. They contended that the 'natives' were incapable of governing themselves. Their selfishness and arrogance so much blinded their sense of reason that they even expressed opposition to the open competition as a means of making selection for superior posts; this, they apprehended, would bring in the 'Babu'* whom they liked as a clerk but hated as their equal.

By their victory over the Ilbert Bill issue, Englishmen got a licence to insult Indians most unashamedly. English hotel-keepers would not receive a 'native' guest for fear of losing their English customers. 'In Bengal and Northern India', says Blunt, 'things are still worse, and I think it is not too much to say that no native gentleman, whatever his rank, age, or character may be, can visit a place of public resort frequented by Englishmen, especially if he be in native dress, without a certain risk of insult and rough treatment. Railway travelling is notoriously dangerous in this respect, and nearly all my native acquaintances had tales to tell of abuse from English fellow-passengers and of having been personally ill-treated and knocked about.'[8] European officers assaulted respectable residents of the country because 'on passing a European in the road they have not dismounted from their horses in token of their inferiority'.[9]

Today a man, whether of the West or of the East, able to defend his self-rerspect may easily suggest, why did the Indians not retaliate? Why did they submit to humiliating behaviour? The suggestion is quite plausible, but if it is examined in the context of the actual conditions, one must pause to think whether the insulted Indians had any means of retaliation.

* a middle class prefix of respect

[8] Blunt, op. cit., p. 263

[9] H. J. S. Cotton, *New India* (1886), p 42

Not many men will be prepared to lay down their lives to preserve their self-respect; they may defend the ideal in the abstract, but few will press it to the point of inviting reprisal. Usually an insult, if resisted, results in violence causing injury to one or both the parties. But will any resistance be offered if the man insulted knows that the insulting party can shoot him to death and that for causing death the guilty will not be hanged? We may quote two English writers. Says Garrett: There was 'the long succession of murders and brutalities perpetrated by Englishmen which either went unpunished or for which, at the demand of the whole European community, only a small penalty was exacted'.[10] The other writer, Morrison, says: 'It is an ugly fact, which it is no use to disguise, that the murder of natives by Englishmen is no infrequent occurrence. Juries in European cases are empanelled from towns: this is the very class in which the arrogance of a conquering race is most offensively strong, and their moral sense does not endorse the legal theory that an Englishman should atone with his life for killing a "nigger".'[11] Three artillery men, according to Morrison, were found guilty of killing one Dr. Suresh Chandra in a brutal manner. They were sentenced only to seven years rigorous imprisonment. A military officer, commenting on this judicial sentence, remarked 'that in any other part of the world but India, the three artillery men would have been hanged'.[12]

Day after day the white man in India reminded Indians that he was a curse and that he had debased himself culturally by his sense of domination over them. The victory of British arms in 1857 had emasculated for a time the fighting spirit of the Indians, and when, during the next 20 years, some enterprising Indians showed tendencies to revive that spirit, Lord Lytton promulgated a law (in 1878), called the Arms Act, making possession of arms without licence an offence punishable 'with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or fine or both.' In the pre-British regimes anybody could bear arms without any interference from government; by the above law, the British monopolized the possession of

[10] Garrett, *An Indian Commentary*, pp. 116-7
[11] Morrison, *Imperial Rule in India*, pp. 27-8
[12] *Ibid*, p. 28

arms also and reduced the chances of violence being organized against them. The law remained in operation throughout British rule, and the people were left only with the pen and tongue to give vent to their feelings. One feels, while studying contemporary history, that it was helplessness which gave importance and value to constitutional agitation. And it was British consciousness of this helplessness which encouraged British citizens in India to insult and humiliate Indians. Even the constitutional agitation, then only a small affair and not possessed of an all-India organization to conduct it, betrayed helplessness. Attention was now devoted to creating an all-India organization.

The idea for such an organization was conceived in 1877 at the time of Lord Lytton's Durbar. Men like Surendranath Banerjea, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Vishwanath Mandlik, Sir Mangaladas Nathoobhoy and Naoroji Furdoonji said to each other that 'if the princes and the nobles in the land could be forced to form a pageant for the glorification of an autocratic Viceroy, why could not the people be gathered together to unite themselves to restrain by constitutional means and methods the spirit of autocratic rule'.[13]

For one reason or the other the people could not be gathered together until the Ilbert Bill agitation accelerated the pace of politics, and in 1883 the first Indian National Conference was held at Calcutta. It was attended by delegates from various provinces. Ananda Mohan Bose, who presided, described the occasion as the first stage towards a national parliament. The conference was a modest affair and did not pass any spectacular resolution. It was not an all-India organization in any true sense. Fortunately, the seed had already germinated elsewhere.

It was in the mind of Hume. In order to appreciate his mission, we must know the man. Allan Octavian Hume was the son of Joseph Hume, a Scottish patriot and reformer, who for a dozen years, was in the service of the East India Company and later on entered Parliament. Allan Hume too entered the service of the Company and inherited his father's qualities. He was one of those rare Europeans who, though wishing

[13] A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, p. 33

British rule to continue, sincerely wanted it to do some good to Indians. He joined the Bengal Civil Service nine years before the Revolt of 1857. At the age of 26 he rose to the position of Chief Civil Officer in charge of Etawah District in U.P. with an area of 1,693 square miles, a population of 722,000 and a revenue of £136,500 and was occupying that position when the Revolt broke out. Districts after districts were falling to Indians, and Etawah met the same fate. Hume showed great courage and valour, both in evacuating and re-occupying the district.

As district officer of Etawah, he took keen interest in the education and general welfare of the people. He would call the excise revenue as 'wages of sin'. When the revenue was rising year after year, he wrote to higher authorities: 'Financially speaking, bearing in mind the almost unexempled distress in face of which this settlement was concluded, it may be regarded as eminently successful. To me, however, the constant growth of the Abkaree* revenue is a source of great regret. Year after year, but alas in vain, I protest against the present iniquitous system which first produced and now supports a large class whose sole interest it is to seduce their fellows into drunkenness and its necessary concomitants, debauchery and crime.... Those only who, like myself, take great pains to ascertain what goes on amongst the native community, really have any conception of the frightful extent to which drunkenness has increased during the last twenty years'.[14] Hume had to suffer for his views; he was degraded and superseded. But as a loyal subject of the British Crown he helped his country as well as India in his own way. He perceived danger to British rule and prescribed a remedy—to promote constitutional way of political thinking in a big way.

The first thing he did was to address a letter to the graduates of Calcutta University. He told them: 'If amongst even you, the elite, fifty men cannot be found with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heartfelt patriotism to take the initiative, and if need be, devote the rest of

* Excise

[14] Wedderburn, op. cit., p. 20

their lives to the cause, there is no hope for India. Her sons must and will remain humble and helpless instruments in the hands of foreign rulers.... If you cannot make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the management of your own affairs, then we, your friends, are wrong, and our adversaries right.'

The next step was positive. He founded the organization of his dream and named it the Indian National Union. Select committees were formed at Karachi, Ahmedabad, Surat, Bombay, Poona, Madras, Calcutta, Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, Agra and Lahore, to serve as local units of the Union and send delegates to the first conference. The Union did not profess to lead the country to self-government. To quote from its Preliminary Report, the Union's aim was 'to oppose, by all constitutional methods, all authorities, high or low, here or in England, whose acts or omissions are opposed to the principles of the government of India laid down from time to time by the British Parliament and endorsed by the British Sovereign, but it holds the continued affiliation of India to Great Britain, at any rate for a period far exceeding the range of any practical political forecast, to be absolutely essential to the interests of our national development '.[15]

The Union did not make any appreciable headway for two years, although Hume had been constantly at work. He proceeded to England and contacted friends, members of Parliament and newspaper editors to solicit their support to Indian questions and aspirations. In the meantime a new Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, arrived (December 1884). According to Wedderburn, 'whereas Mr. Hume was himself disposed to begin his reform propaganda on the social side, it was apparently on Lord Dufferin's advice that he took up the work of political organization as the matter first to be dealt with. Lord Dufferin seems to have told him that as head of the Government he had found the greatest difficulty in ascertaining the real wishes of the people; and that, for purposes of administration, it would be a public benefit if there existed some responsible organization, through which the Government might be kept informed regarding the

[15] *Ibid*, p. 52

best Indian public opinion.'[16] Lord Dufferin suggested that Indian leaders should meet yearly and point out to Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved, and that such an assembly should not be presided over by a Government official, for the people might not speak out their minds in his presence. Hume was convinced and so were the leading Indians whom he apprised with Lord Dufferin's scheme.

In March 1885 a circular letter was sent round notifying that 'a conference of the Indian National Union will be held at Poona from December 25 to 31, 1885', and that the 'conference will be composed of Delegates—leading politicians well-acquainted with the English language—from all parts of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras Presidencies'. (Later on the venue was changed from Poona to Bombay.) The circular said that 'indirectly, this conference will form the germ of a National Parliament, and if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is still wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions'. The projected gathering was described as 'the Conference of the Indian National Union', but a few days before the date fixed for the meeting, the name was changed, at the suggestion of Hume, to the 'Indian National Congress'. It was this Congress, which in the years to come was transformed into a revolutionary organization and achieved freedom.

Almost all political associations of the country were represented at the first Congress, and delegates (72) came from the following places: Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Karachi, Surat, Poona, Lucknow, Agra, Viramgaon, Benares, Simla, Allahabad, Lahore, Ambala, Ahmedabad, Berhampur (Madras), Masulipatam, Chinghlipatam, Tanjore, Khumbhakonam, Madura, Tinneveli, Coimbatore, Salem and Cuddapur. Rightly did the president of the Congress, Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee, say that 'never had so important and comprehensive an assemblage occurred within historical times on the soil of India'. The main resolution adopted by the Congress demanded 'reform and expansion of the supreme and provincial Legislative Councils by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members' and that 'all

[16] *Ibid*, pp. 59-60

budgets should be referred to these Councils for consideration, their members being moreover empowered to interpellate the Executive in regard to all branches of the administration and that a standing committee of the House of Commons should be constituted to receive and consider any formal protest that may be recorded by majorities of such Councils against the exercise by the Executive of the power, which would be vested in it, of overruling the decision of such majorities'. Speaking on this resolution Dadabhai Naoroji said: 'If Government granted the reform and the right of interpellation prayed for, much of the misunderstanding and odium Government had to suffer would be removed.' Another well-known leader of the time Subrahmanya Aiyer said: 'Due to the absence of the right of election, the non-official members of the Council are practically powerless.' After the session was over, a few delegates discussed how public opinion could be focussed on the resolution. They sent round 10,000 printed copies of the reforms proposal in the English language and 100,000 in provincial languages to different parts of India. Copies were also circulated in England through the Cobden Club.

How different and how petty was this aspiration compared with the way of violence for getting rid of the British! But that way was becoming every day more and more impracticable. What matters most, for the purpose of the present work, is this aspiration, because it is one of the foundation stones of the freedom movement and structure of democracy in India. The other resolutions adopted by the Congress can be likened to those usually adopted by an opposition party in a democratic country, the underlying suggestion being that if Indians had a voice in the administration, it would be less costly and the people would be happy. Loyalty to the British Crown was announced at the Congress, and when the three-day session ended with three cheers to Hume, the sponsor of the Congress returned the greetings with "three cheers for Her Majesty the Queen Empress". It was a high Government officer, H. J. S. Cotton, who had just about that time observed: 'He would be a bold man who would unhesitatingly affirm that the people of India are friendly to the British Government. If outward manifestations are of any avail, there ought to be no

doubt of the loyalty of the native chiefs who, during the recent crisis, offered to place their armies at the disposal of Government to resist invasion*.... But I must caution my readers not to be carried away unduly by these manifestations. .... It is well that we should realize in its full measure the undercurrent of bitterness and discontent which so widely prevails among the members of the educated and English-speaking community, and not attach undue importance to the newspaper utterances and other expressions of loyalty of which so much has been made.'[17] There can be no clearer mirror than this of the helplessness under which educated Indians were meeting and drafting prayers to be addressed to the British Government.

Several other organizations, much smaller than the Congress, also came into being about the same time; for example the Madras Mahajan Sabha (established in 1884), the Madras Native Association, the Bombay Presidency Association (founded in 1885), the National League. But they were all overshadowed by the Congress which, as the years rolled by, was growing into a people's organization—the only organization of the people, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, etc.

The second Congress was held a year later at Calcutta. The speeches made at this and subsequent Congresses were a judicious mixture of expressions of loyalty and boldness. Here is a sample from the presidential address of Dadabhai Naoroji (Calcutta, 1885): 'It is our good fortune that we are under a rule which makes it possible for us to meet in this manner.... (But) all the benefits we have derived from British rule will go for nothing if after all, the country is to continue going deeper into the abyss of destitution.' He said that the condition of the peasantry had greatly deteriorated since 1848 and that 40 millions of people had only one meal a day and not always that. S. Subrahmanya Aiyer added his testimony saying that it was impossible to control 'the extortions of the revenue authorities'. And the Congress expressed, in one of its resolutions, 'grave apprehension' over 'the increasing poverty of vast numbers of the population of India'. The Calcutta Congress elucidated the previous year's demand for expanded Councils, ask-

* The reference is to an apprehended Russian invasion.

[17] *New India*, pp. 20-22

ing for a 50 per cent elected strength and suggesting that the election should be indirect—by municipalities, local boards, chambers of commerce and the universities—to the provincial Legislative Councils and by these Councils to the Supreme Council. The resolution conceded, as before, to Government the right of overruling the decisions of the Council provided the decisions of the Provincial Governments were made subject to appeal to the Government of India and those of the Government of India to the Standing Committee of the House of Commons.

The Congress concluded with a garden party given by the Viceroy. From the following year this national activity was stepped up, disseminating the impact of the annual sessions among a large section of the people. For the next annual Congress a reception committee of some 120 members embracing Hindus of different castes, Mohammedans, Indian Christians and Eurasians, was formed at Madras (the venue of the 1887 Congress). Every town of over 10,000 inhabitants was asked to form a sub-committee and vigorous political propaganda was carried on; 30,000 copies of a Tamil Congress Catechism (by Viraraghavachariar) were distributed. A striking proof of the desired result was that 8,000 people sent small and big subscriptions, amounting to Rs. 5,000, to the Congress fund. Remittances came even from Indians in Mandalay, Rangoon, Singapore and the eastern islands. At the session Surendranath Banerjea presented an appeal. He said: 'Today I have brought for your consideration an appeal signed by 45,000 men. When they signed the document, I was overwhelmed with joy at their energy and enthusiasm. A so-called untouchable came and said, "Sir, our own men will make laws! What a great luck it is!" A very poor Mussalman gave me four annas and requested me to utilize it in our work. Another peasant discussed with his neighbour—"Look, as we conduct the Panchayat system and accept the decision of the Panchayat, so our men will make laws and we too shall be pleased to abide by them." Please see, gentlemen, how the mass is anxious about this matter'. (Banerjea was speaking on the 'Expansion of Indian and Provincial Legislative Councils' resolution'.)

So, soon after its birth the Congress began exciting bitter-

ness against itself in a section of British officials in India. It was in the context of this feeling that one of the delegates, Eardley Norton, a famous European advocate of Madras, said at the session: 'I was told yesterday by one for whose character and qualities I cherish a great esteem that in joining myself with the labourers in the Congress, I have earned for myself the new title of a "veiled seditionist." If it be sedition, gentlemen, to rebel against all wrong, if it be sedition to insist that the people should have a fair share in the administration of their own country and affairs, if it be sedition to resist tyranny, to raise my voice against oppression, to mutiny against injustice, to insist upon a hearing before sentence, to uphold the liberation of the individual, to vindicate our common right to gradual but ever-advancing reform—if this be sedition, I am rightly glad, when I look around me today to know and feel I am ranked as one amongst such a magnificent array of "Seditionists".'[18]

This time again the delegates were invited to the Government House. 'The Governor was all attention to the guests. His relationship with them was most cordial. A heavy tiffin was arranged for; special arrangements were made to give pleasure to the delegates and Governor's band welcomed them with a musical entertainment'. But in 1888 the Governor of the North-Western Provinces, Sir Auckland Colvin, in whose capital (Allahabad) the annual Congress was to meet, showed an attitude of unwelcome, nay hostility. The establishment of a political organization was agreed to by Lord Dufferin because it would, he believed, serve as a 'safety valve', but quite a few provincial Governments now regarded the Congress as a danger signal. 'A gentleman who had attended the Madras Congress in defiance of his district officer was called on to give security of Rs. 20,000 to keep peace. He paid it and went away fearing that if he appealed and won his case the authorities would devise other ways of harassing and humiliating him. In one district of the Punjab, in one year, security for good behaviour, etc. was demanded from between 5,000 and 6,000 people.'[19]

The Congress asked for a bit of legislative reform, but in-

[18] Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, pp. 40-1
[19] *Ibid*, p. 56

stead, the country was tasting official resentment, a kind of repression, and Hume lamented: 'Our educated men singly, our Press far and wide, our representatives at the National Congress—one and all—have endeavoured to instruct the Government, but the Government, like all autocratic governments, has refused to be instructed, and it will now be for us to instruct the nations, the great nation in its island home and the far greater nations of this vast continent, so that every Indian that breathes upon the sacred soil of this our Motherland may become our comrade and coadjutor, our supporter, and, if need be, our solider in the great war that we, like Cobden and his noble band, will wage for justice, for our liberties and rights.'[20]

In a mild way he began implementing his intention. 'He set to work with his wonted energy, appealing for funds to all classes of the Indian community, distributing tracts, leaflets, and pamphlets, sending out lecturers, and calling meetings both in large towns and in country districts. Throughout the country, over 1,000 meetings were thus held, at many of which over 5,000 persons were present; and arrangements were made for the distribution of half a million of pamphlets, translations into twelve Indian languages being circulated of two remarkable pamphlets, *A Congress Catechism, and A Conversation between Moulvi Fariduddin and one Rambaksh of Kambakhtpur*, showing by a parable the necessary evils of absentee State landlordism, however benevolent the intention may be.'[21]

This action of Hume, with potentialities of shaking up the masses to consciousness, was looked upon with alarm by the authorities. His English friends went to him and told him with solemn faces and in grave voices: 'You are lettting loose forces that you cannot control.' He explained his position and put forward his 'Apologia' in a speech at a great meeting at Allahabad on April 30, 1888. (The speech was published under the title, *A Speech on the Indian National Congress, its Origin, Aims and Objects*.) The salient point he made out was: The aim of the Congress was to educate the people 'into what has been described as a genuine parliamentary frame of mind—to familiarize the country with the methods and working of re-

[20] Wedderburn, pp. 61-3
[21] *Ibid*, p. 63

presentative institutions on a large scale, and thus, as this familiarity grew, to demonstrate to the Government and people of England that India was already ripe for some measure of those institutions to which the entire intelligentsia of the country so earnestly aspires'.[22] Equally important was the other point: 'The sin of illegal or anarchical proceedings is brought home to them (the people), and the conviction is engendered that by united, patient, constitutional agitation they are certain ultimately to obtain all they can reasonably or justly ask for, while by any recourse to hasty or violent action they must inevitably ruin their cause and entail endless misery on themselves.'[23]

Hume was actuated, in extending his political activity to the mass of the people, by benevolent motives for India as also for Britain. He knew that the masses were susceptible to organized violence and that it was desirable to keep them from it by demonstrating the superior merits of constitutional agitation. The narrow-minded British officials could not appreciate his method. The Anglo-Indian community and its Press had, since the very start of Congress activities, been ridiculing it and hurling malicious invectives at it. Prominent among the anti-Congress papers were the *Pioneer* and the *Englishman*. The Indian Civil Service made no secret of its dislike of the Congress but did not show open hostility because of the sympathy evinced in the three years by the heads of the administration. But, to quote Wedderburn, they 'desired to suppress the Congress, and recommended that Hume should be deported'.[24]

The most conspicuous man among them, who threw aside the lid of self-imposed restraint, was Sir Auckland Colvin. Until the third Congress he had been distinctly friendly to the Congress. He was upset by the mass campaign of 1888. He entered into a lengthy correspondence with Hume. (His letter covers 20 printed pages and Hume's reply about 60.) He apprehended 'definite mischief from this aggressive or denun-

[22] *Ibid*, pp. 64-5
[23] *Ibid*, p. 65
[24] *Ibid*, p. 67

ciatory method, because it tended to excite hatred of the Government and the officials and because agitation would produce counter-agitation dividing the country into strongly hostile groups'. He suggested that Indian leaders should engage themselves in social reform, which was more desirable than political reform for the welfare of the people.

The far-sighted Hume told Colvin: "I have always admitted that in certain provinces and from certain points of view, the (Congress) movement was premature, but from the most vital point of view, the future maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire, the question when the Congress started was *not*, is it premature, but is it too late—will the country now accept it?.... A safety valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed, and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised.'

The fourth Congress met at Allahabad under the shadow of official hostility, the Governor putting all manner of obstacles in its way. Three sites for the session, successively chosen by Congress leaders, were rejected on one excuse or the other by the Government. In the fourth attempt the leaders circumvented the Government by taking on lease a Nawab's bungalow and thus precluding chances of Government interference.

A Scot, George Yule, was chosen to preside over the Allahabad session. He was a prominent merchant of Calcutta and at that time president of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. In his presidential speech he concerned himself with one subject only, namely, reform of the Legislative Councils. Deprecating the argument that India was not fit for representative institutions, he read out an extract from Professor Thorold Rogers' book, the *British Citizen*—'I do not believe that 100 years ago more than one man in ten, or one woman in twenty, knew how to read and write. When I was a youth in a Hampshire village, hardly one of the peasantry who was over forty years of age knew how to read.' Yule then said: 'Going another century or two back, the people of England, man and boy, high and low, with the exception of a mere handful, were steeped in the grossest ignorance, and yet there

was a House of Commons'. He therefore contended that 'if there be but a small minority in a country fitted to exercise the useful function of the franchise, it is a mistake to withhold the privilege from them on the ground that others are not fitted.' And he added: 'We want the Legislative Council to be expanded to an extent that will admit of the representation of various interests in the country as far as that may be practicable. We want half the Councils to be elected, the other half to be in the appointment of Government, and we are willing that the right of veto should be with the Executive.'

India was yet far away from the kind of propaganda and campaign Britain experienced in the first half of the 19th century. There were no mass meetings, no demonstrations, no signature campaigns. All that was being done in the name of the Congress was designed to make the people conscious of their right of association with the country's government and to make the rulers in India and the Government and people of Britain conscious of the demand for this right. Congress propaganda was therefore extended to Britain. The first step was taken in 1887 when Dadabhai Naoroji, then residing in London, volunteered to act as Agent for the Congress. 'He was not supplied with funds, and being engaged in business, he could only spare a small portion of his time, so that practically little was done.'[25] In 1888 some perceptible progress was made when W. C. Bonnerjee and Eardley Norton joined Naoroji and succeeded in enlisting for their cause the great champion of India, Charles Bradlaugh. A paid Agency was established under W. Digby and an office was opened at 25, Craven Street, Strand, and a vigorous campaign was got under way. Ten thousand copies of the Report of the Third Congress, and many thousand copies of speeches and pamphlets were circulated. Bonnerjee and Norton addressed public meetings, and Bradlaugh who, for his interest in India, was known as the 'Member for India' delivered gratis many lectures on Indian questions in different parts of England. 'During the seven months of this work an amount of about £1,700 was spent.'

[25] Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 87

Hume was convinced that no reform of any value could be expected from the official hierarchy in India. The alternative was to intensify the propaganda in Britain. He sent round a letter on February 10, 1889 to Congress workers in India impressing on them the vital need for work in Britain on an adequate scale. He said: 'Our only hope lies in awakening the British public to a sense of the wrongs of our people—to a consciousness of the unwisdom and injustice of the present administration. The least that we could do would be to provide ample funds—for sending and keeping constantly in England deputations of our ablest speakers to plead their country's cause—to enable our British committee to keep up an unbroken series of public meetings, whereat the true state of affairs in India might be expounded—to flood Great Britain with pamphlets, leaflets, newspapers, and magazine articles—in a word, to carry on an agitation there on the lines and scale of that in virtue of which the Anti-Corn Law League triumphed.'[26]

His proposal was approved, and on July 27, 1889 a committee was formed in England, consisting of Sir William Wedderburn (chairman), Dadabhai Naoroji, W. S. Caine, M. P., and W. S. Bright McLaren, M. P., with W. Digby as secretary. Later on the committee was joined by John Ellis, M. P., George Yule, W. C. Bonnerjee, Sir Charles Schwann, M. P., Sir Herbert Roberts, M. P., Dr. G. B. Clark and Martin Wood. The committee was named 'The British Committee of the Indian National Congress'.

Congress leaders were growing more and more confident of their organization's power and influence as will be evident from the following extract from the Congress's official report for 1888: 'The Congress idea has now obtained such a hold upon the mind of the country that no earthly power can extinguish it. If ten thousand of the most prominent Congressmen were deported tomorrow, the idea would still creep on, spreading from mind to mind, till it had seized every man, woman and child amongst the Indian population, ever growing stronger and stronger in every mind which had received

[26] *Ibid*, pp. 85-6

the seed. It is essentially beneficent in its character and, in its open growth, instinct with peace and goodwill to men. Official opposition and persecution will not only add to its growth but will operate to convert an open, above-board, constitutional movement into a secret, underground, and therefore unconstitutional one.'

Governor Colvin's behaviour at Allahabad bred fears that Government opposition to the Congress would grow further by the time the next session came round in December 1889. That year's Congress assembled at Bombay, but to the surprise of every one, while Colvin had prohibited Government servants from attending the Allahabad session, the Bombay Governor enforced no such restriction, and many Government servants were to be seen at the Bombay session.

The main resolution again dealt with the Councils and their expansion, but this time a skeleton reform scheme was drawn up and the President was asked to submit it to Charles Bradlaugh 'with the respectful request of the Congress that he may be pleased to cause a Bill to be drafted on the lines indicated in this skeleton scheme and introduce the same in the British House of Commons.' The scheme proposed:

'(a) The Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils should consist respectively of members, not less than one-half of whom are to be elected, no more than one-fourth to be ex-officio, and the rest to be nominated by Government.

'(b) Revenue districts to constitute ordinary territorial units for electoral purposes.

'(c) All male British subjects over 21 years of age possessing certain qualifications to be voters.

'(d) Voters in each district to elect representatives to one or more electoral bodies.

'(e) All the representatives thus elected by all the districts, included in the jurisdiction of each electoral body, to elect members to the Imperial legislature at the rate of every five million of the total population of the electoral jurisdiction and to their own provincial legislature at the rate of one per million of the said total population in such wise that whenever the Parsees, Christians, Mohammedans or Hindus are in a minority, the total number of Parsees, Christians, Mohamme-

dans or Hindus, as the case may be, elected to the Provincial Legislature, shall not so far as may lie possible, bear a less proportion to the total number of members elected thereto than the total number of Parsees, Christians, Hindus or Mohammedans, as the case may be, in such electoral jurisdiction bear to the total proportion. Members of both legislatures should possess certain qualifications and not to be subject to certain disqualifications, both of which will be settled later.'

This resolution obviously required more educative propaganda in England, and the Congress appointed a deputation to proceed to London; it left India in March 1890, and arrived in London in April. At the many meetings organized by the British Committee of the Congress for the members of the deputation in great towns of England, Wales and Scotland, doubts and misgivings were cleared up. One of the most well-informed organizations under whose auspices a debate on India was held was the Oxford Union. Here, as elsewhere, the ignorance about India was not less surprising. The principal Indian speaker at the Union meeting was Surendranath Banerjea. The following extract from his speech gives a sample of the ignorance in England and his answer:

> The statement has been made in the course of this debate that the Indians before the advent of the English were a pack of barbarians or semi-barbarians; I believe that was the language that was used. Let me remind this House that they come—the Hindus of India, the race to which I have the honour to belong—they come from a great and ancient stock; that at a time when the ancestors of the most enlightened European nations were roaming in their native woods and forests, our fathers had founded great empires, established noble cities, and cultivated a system of ethics, a system of religion, and a noble language which at the present moment excites the admiration of the civilized world. You have only to walk across the way and place yourselves in the Bodleian library to witness the ancient records of Indian industry, Indian culture, and Indian ethics; therefore it seems to me the remark is somewhat out of place. If the remark was made to prejudice

the claim which we have now the honour to put forward, to prejudice our claim for representative institutions, never was it more misplaced for the simple reason that self-governing institutions formed an essential feature of the civilization of the Aryan race, and we come from the Aryan stock.

Another attack made on India was to the effect that the people were educationally very backward; and Banerjea replied: 'The number of schools in England in 1821 was only 18,467 and the scholars 650,000 and it was not until 1881 that they reached the number of schools and scholars in India. And yet in 1881 England had full-fledged parliamentary institutions, and we were asking for much less.'

When the division was taken at the Union meeting, it was found, to the great astonishment of the deputationists, that the resolution on India was carried by a comfortable majority. 'It demonstrated that the Congress programme of reform was so moderate as to commend itself even to the most conservative section of the British public.' At a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester, after Banerjea had addressed it, a gentleman stood up and said: 'I have never been so deeply moved as now in regard to Indian affairs.'

But so far as the British Government was concerned, the person whose opinion would deserve attention as to the extent to which reform should be granted to satisfy Congress leaders was the Viceroy. While laying down his office (December 1888), Lord Dufferin described the Congress, at a farewell dinner, as a 'microscopic minority'. He had his reasons: 'At present, however, it appears to me a groundless contention that the Congress represents the people of India. If they have been the real representatives of the people of India, that is to say, of the voiceless millions, instead of seeking to circumscribe the incidence of the Income Tax as they desired to do, they would have received a mandate to decuple it.'

He was not far wrong. While the Congress had demanded the taxable minimum of the income tax to be raised, none of its resolutions could be interpreted as reflecting the suffering of the poor peasant and suggesting improvement in his

condition. It was the downtrodden who was discontented and who threatened to become disaffected to British rule, and if the Congress steered clear of him, the Viceroy could not look upon the Congress as a 'safety-valve'. From this viewpoint, even the expansion of the Legislative Councils could be dismissed as a concern of the upper classes. Nevertheless, the position the Congress had acquired could not be ignored and Lord Dufferin, some time before his departure, had appointed a committee of three of his Executive Councillors to examine the question of political reforms and make proposals. The plan that emerged from the committee and as ultimately submitted to the Secretary of State for India recommended 'enlargement of Provincial Councils, enhancement of their status, multiplication of their functions, partial introduction into them of elective principle and liberalization of their general character as political institutions.'[27]

This recommendation was not known to Congress leaders when they decided at the 1889 Congress to request Bradlaugh to draft and introduce in Parliament a Bill incorporating the contents of the Congress resolution on the subject. Now two Bills were in the process of drafting, Bradlaugh's and the Secretary of State's. The former came up first for introduction, but could not be taken up and waited for its chance which never came because it died in 1891 with the death of Bradlaugh. In the same year (1890) the Secretary of State, Lord Cross, presented his Bill in the House of Lords. It also remained in abeyance throughout 1890 and 1891 and could not become law until 1892.

In the meantime the Congress was losing caste with the Government of India. Some days before the annual session of 1890 met at Calcutta in December, the Bengal Government issued a circular letter to all secretaries and heads of Government departments informing them that under orders of the Government of India, the presence of officials even as visitors at Congress meeting was not advisable and that their taking part in the proceedings of any such meeting was absolutely prohibited. The visitors' cards sent to the Lt. Governor and

[27] Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918, p. 42

his Councillor by the Congress secretariat were returned. The Viceroy's reaction to this circular letter was curious. When the Congress secretariat made a reference to him, he said that the interpretation put on the order of the Government of India by the Bengal Government was based upon a misunderstanding. He even said that the Congress movement was 'perfectly legitimate in itself' and that the 'Government of India recognized that the Congress movement is regarded as representing in India what in Europe would be called the more advanced Liberal Party as distinguished from the great body of conservative opinion which exists side by side with it.' (Marquess of Lansdowne was then Viceroy.)

From the report of the Congress of 1890 it appears that the poor was now getting due attention: 'The administration of India remains as a whole linked with some virtues but a thousand crimes. Ninety-five per cent of all the most important and responsible offices in the country are monopolised by Europeans. One-fifth of the entire population tremble on the verge of starvation. Almost every indigenous art and industry has been crushed, and the agriculture is slowly deteriorating under a gasping rack-renting system of temporary settlements.' But a critic, like Lord Dufferin, could again assert that the Congress did not represent 'the people of India' as different from rich classes. The (indirect) demand for Permanent Settlement (in provinces where it did not exist) would eventually benefit landlords (whose interests were considered safe in the hands of the Congress); in Bengal, which was the first to have Permanent Settlement, the first exploiter of the peasant was the landlord, who paid to the Government the permanently settled revenue but periodically increased the rent burden on the tiller.

The Congress was, to all intents and purposes, a moderate political organization, though now and then certain delegates availed themselves of the freedom of expression to ventilate the common man's grievances. For example, Peter Paul Pillai, a delegate from Madras told the 1891 Congress (held at Nagpur): 'With a single stroke of pen, the Forest Laws have extinguished the communal rights of the ryot*—rights which

* Subject people, usually used for peasants

have been enjoyed from time immemorial, rights recognized and respected by former Governments and even by the British Government in former times. Under the pressure of necessity, people are driven to infringe the all-embracing Forest Laws and thus stand liable to criminal prosecution. For petty infringements of these vexatious forest ordinances, thousands of criminal prosecutions take place in my district.' Another speaker, S. B. Bhate, complained that while Hindu and Mohammedan rulers left the forests free to enable people to make use of them for their economic and other needs, the British extended their monopoly to them as another source of income. Ordinarily a government can tap new sources of revenue, but the charge against the British was that they appropriated much of the collections to their own account, leaving the poor poorer.

Signs of hatred not only of British rule but also of British fashion and British industries were growing; at the Congress they were voiced by a Punjab delegate, Murlidhar: 'You, you, it seems, are content to join with these accursed monsters in fattening on the heart's blood of your brethren; (cries of no, no). I say, Yes: look round; what are all these chandeliers and lamps and European-made chairs and tables, and smart clothes and hats, and English coats and bonnets and frocks, and silver-mounted canes, and all the luxurious fittings of your houses, but trophies of India's misery, mementoes of India's starvation! Every rupee you have spent on European-made articles is a rupee of which you have robbed your poorer brethren, honest handicraftsmen, who can now no longer earn a living. Free trade, fair play between nations, how I hate the sham! What fair play in trade can there be between impoverished India and the bloated capitalist England?'

Since the time Hume discovered and frustrated the preparations for a revolt, India had considerably changed. Violence had receded and constitutional agitation was not only taking its place but debunking and condemning it with professions of loyalty to the British Crown. The British now felt safe in the saddle, and they decided that all that they should do was to add a few more Indians to the membership of the Legislative Councils without parting with an iota of

their power. That was what Lord Cross's Bill, which became the Indian Councils Act of 1892, did. The number of 'additional members', both in the Supreme and local Councils, was slightly increased, the maximum being fixed at sixteen in the case of the former, twenty in case of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, and fifteen for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, where a legislative council was for the first time established in 1886. The principle of election demanded by the Congress was not directly conceded, but the Act authorised the Governor-General-in-Council to prescribe the method of appointing the 'additional members'. The Governor-General utilized this power to introduce a system of elections. He asked eight members for the local Councils to be elected by the Municipalities, District Boards, Chambers of Commerce, Universities, etc. and four members for the Supreme Council to be elected by the non-official members of the local Councils. The Act also conceded to members the right to discuss budgets and ask questions on matters of public interest.

The administration went on as before. There was no relief to the poor. The salt tax remained, the forest laws remained. So did all the laws and methods calculated to impoverish the poor and fill the British coffers as also those of the Indian aristocracy. But India turned a new page in her history: the foundation of the elective system was laid, which could be built upon with the agitation yielding further instalments of reform.

4

Muslim Attitude to Political Consciousness

India was inhabited mainly by the followers of Hinduism and Islam, as it is even now after the formation of Pakistan; others, like Sikhs and Indian Christians, were much less numerous. Men and women of two religious systems are bound to differ in the way of worship and in their outlook on certain aspects of life; most Hindus and Muslims did not take meals with each other, and this difference was understandably explained by the Hindus' extreme conservatism—such abstinence was scrupulously observed by Hindus among themselves also, men of some castes not dining with those of some other castes. But despite this, Hindus and Muslims possessed all the attributes of a common citizenship; they lived side by side peacefully as members of a common Indian society. If compared with the two sections of the Christians in Europe, who often indulged in terrible violence, the Hindus and Muslims of India could be held up as worthy of emulation. And yet, the warring Christians were blended into a single political community in different countries of the West, while the Hindus and Muslims in India were divided over the political fleshpots; the Muslims were utilized to obstruct the struggle for freedom. Let us examine how it happened.

The Muslims of India could, for the purpose of this study, be divided into two classes: (1) the descendants of the ruling and feudal classes who exercised a dominating influence during Muslim rule; (2) converts and descendants of the converts, who mostly belonged before conversion to lower castes of Hindus called untouchables. For many years, after British rule had been established, the former nursed a grievance that they had been deprived of their power and pelf and that

Islam no more occupied the dominant position it did when the Muslims ruled. The latter had lost little to brood over and were as happy or unhappy as their Hindu brethren.

Early in the 19th century a Muslim visionary, Syed Ahmed, hailing from the district of Rae Bareli in U.P., took it into his head to plant the Crescent throughout every district of India. Believing that the movement for the reconquest of India must start in the north with the help of Afghanistan, he proceeded to Kabul via Sind with his numerous followers. The Afghanistan ruler denied his association with Syed Ahmed; whatever the truth, Syed Ahmed's army declared *jihad* against the Punjab, making out the alleged ill-treatment of Muslims by Sikhs as a cause—Ranjit Singh was then ruler of the Punjab. Syed Ahmed was killed on the battle-field.

This happened in the early thirties; but Syed Ahmed's movement, called the Wahabi revolt, remained for another generation with long periods of suspended animation. The Wahabis involved the British rulers of India in several costly wars on the Frontier. There was a network of conspiracies in the provinces, and each war on the Frontier produced its corresponding State trials of non-belligerents. Each case gave clues which led to a whole crop of others. Between 1864 and 1871 there were five great State trials, as a result of which dozens of Muslims were awarded transportation for life and heavy sentences of imprisonment. As a matter of policy capital punishment was, in every case, commuted to transportation for life. At the time of the 1871 trial, Muslim bitterness against the British reached its climax. The Chief Justice of Bengal, John Paxton Norman, was stabbed to death by a Muslim on the steps of his own Tribunal; some time later the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, was murdered in the Andaman Islands by a Wahabi convict, Sher Ali.

Mayo no doubt fell to the blow of a Wahabi, but he had already laid out a clever policy to break up the movement. The Wahabi propagandists had been telling the Muslims that India under British rule was *Darul-Harb* (land ruled by the Infidel) and that it must be converted into *Darul-Islam* (a country ruled by the Faithful). From this proposition Mayo's advisers picked up a strategic point: If one set of doctors of

Islam declared British territories as *Darul-Harb,* another could be secured to interpret them as a *Darul-Islam* in which *Jihad* was a sin. Accordingly a discussion was started throughout the country as to whether India was *Darul-Harb* or *Darul-Islam.* Many high-placed leaders of Islam came forward to declare that India was *Darul-Islam.* Among them the most important, so far as Indian politics were concerned, was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who had consistently been loyal to the British and opposed to the Wahabis.

Sir Syed was the foremost leader of the Muslim community, particularly in northern India, during the post-Revolt period of the 19th century. His attention was constantly drawn towards the pitiable condition of the Muslim aristocracy, which had shunned English education and consequently deprived itself of opportunities of high posts under Government. The little share that came to Indians was, he learnt with regret, monopolized by Hindus. Therefore he devoted the rest of his life to (1) promoting English education among Muslims; and (2) keeping Muslims aloof from politics. The former would get them Government posts and the latter would save them from being dubbed once again an anti-British community. (During the Wahabi movement, Muslims were generally regarded as rebels.)

Under Sir Syed's leadership the Muslims came down from the top of opposition to the bottom of loyalty to the British Government. Here was an opportunity for any mischief-mongering Englishman to seize. Perhaps the first man to do so was Theodore Beck, who in 1883 was offered the post of the Principal of Sir Syed's Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. Before he left England to join this post, he expressed himself thus in a speech: 'The parliamentary system in India is most unsuited and the experiment would prove futile if representative institution is introduced. The Muslims will be under the majority opinion of the Hindus, a thing which will be highly resented by the Muslims and which I am sure, they will not accept quietly.'[1] The M.A.O. College became a mentor of educated Muslims, and the prin-

[1] Quoted in Mohammed Noman, *Muslim India,* p. 52

cipal occupied an effective position; he was looked upon as a friend, philosopher and guide by them. To nationalist India Beck was a mischief-monger; to the Muslims he was a highly valued adviser. In him they saw an ardent supporter of the belief, to which many Muslims religiously clung, that the Muslims were a separate entity. Most of those who said that the Indians were and should be one political community, as men of different religions were in democratic countries, were Hindus; this was interpreted as a selfish design of Hindus, who in a democratic system would occupy a superior position by virtue of their majority.

Later in the same year, Sir Syed himself repeated Beck's assertion: 'I am convinced that no part of India has yet arrived at the stage when the system of representation can be adopted in its fullest scope, even in regard to local affairs.... The system of representation by election means the representation of the views and interests of the majority of the population.'[2] A year after the birth of the Congress Sir Syed started a Muslim organization, which he named the Mohammedan Education Congress (renamed the Muslim Educational Conference in 1890). He told the first Conference: 'I do not agree with those who believe that political discussions would be conducive to our national progress. I regard progress of education as the only means of national progress.' He regretted that but for the opposition of Muslims to the British, 'our young men' would be 'holding today important positions in the civil and military services'. At the next year's Educational Conference, which met at Lucknow, Sir Syed directed his attack against the reforms proposals of the Indian National Congress. 'You will, I am sure,' he said, 'never like that commoners, even if they possess B. A. or M. A. degrees, should sit in the legislative councils and exercise administrative authority over you. Imagine the Viceroy calling these men "my colleagues" or "my honourable colleagues". The Government can never agree to this proposition. The Viceroy cannot invite them to dinners and state functions in which great dignitaries like Dukes and Earls participate.'

[2] Speech made in the Imperial Legislative Council on the Central Provinces Local Self-Government Bill, quoted in Noman, *Ibid*, p. 34

Similar was his attitude to the Congress demand for the admission of Indians to the Civil Service: 'How can noble classes of Indians tolerate petty commoners, whose origin they know very well, as their administrators. It is different with Englishmen, for we do not know at this distance from which class they come. Then, England is a fit place for competitive examinations where the population is homogeneous; but India is inhabited by several nationalities. For another reason our country is not fit for competitive examinations; there is marked disparity in the educational attainments of various people. Muslims are educationally backward; the Hindus of this province are backward compared to the Bengalis.'

Sir Syed's childhood and youth were spent at the Mughal court, a fading glory. There he saw 'the whole falseness of the Padishah's position, the fiction of his phantom authority and the power of the British'. In 1837, then a youth of 20, he refused to remain with the Padishah (the Mughal Emperor), much to the displeasure of his relatives, and took service under the British. At first he was a clerk; later he became a Munsif (a judicial officer of lower rank). He did not know English, but was otherwise a man of letters and produced several valuable works. He was so enamoured of the British that Indians to him were 'animals'. He was convinced that British rule had come to stay for a long period, a period not foreseeable; and he had the deep-rooted conviction that only men of 'noble' aristocratic classes had the right and ability to be associated with government and administration. To such a man democracy was a farce, unsuitable to India. The fact of Muslim backwardness in education only added force to his conviction.

He carried his loyalty to the British to a questionable point. While writing on the Revolt of 1857 in his *Causes of the Mutiny*, he criticised the Government of India for not making use of Hindu-Muslim differences. He said: 'The English army system in India has always been faulty, and one great fault was the paucity of English troops. When Nadir Shah conquered Khorasan and became master of the two kingdoms of Persia and Afghanistan, he invariably kept the two armies at equal length. The one consisted or rather was composed

of Persians and Kuzul Bashis and the other was composed of Afghans. When the Persian army attempted to rise, the Afghan army was at hand to quell the rebellion, and vice-versa. The English did not follow this precedent in India.... The Government (of India) certainly did put the two antagonistic races into the same regiment. The constant intercourse had done its work, and the two races in regiment had almost become one. It is but natural and to be expected that a feeling of friendship and brotherhood must spring up between the men of a regiment, constantly brought together as they are. They consider themselves as one body; and thus it was that the differences which exist between Hindus and Mohammedans had, in these regiments, been almost entirely smoothed away. If a portion of the regiment engaged in anything, all the rest joined. If separate regiments of Hindus and separate regiments of Mohammedans had been raised, this feeling of brotherhood could not have arisen.'[3]

Sir John (afterwards Lord) Lawrence, who took an active part in putting down the Revolt and who was later appointed Viceroy of India, said almost the same thing as did Sir Syed: 'Among the defects of the pre-Mutiny army, unquestionably the worst and the one that operated most fatally against us, was the brotherhood and homogeneity of the Bengal army, and for this purpose the remedy is counterpoise; firstly, the great counterpoise of the Europeans, and secondly that of the native races.' A Royal Commission, known as the Peel Commission, was appointed to make suggestions as to how the policy should be given effect to, and in 1861 the army was re-organized. Various communal groups were so arranged that they retained their tribal or communal loyalties and at the same time balanced the characteristics and influence of one another.[4]

For many years, far-sighted Englishmen had been warning the British rulers that Indian unity would prove disastrous to their rule. Sir John Seeley, writing in *The Expansion of*

[3] Col. Graham, *Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed*, pp, 54-5

[4] Nirad C. Chowdhry, *Defence of India*, quoted in Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan, *Communal Triangle in India*, p. 54

England, had observed that 'so long as the populations have not formed the habit of criticising their Government, whatever it be, and of rebelling against it, the Government of India from England is possible and there is nothing miraculous about it. But if the state of things should alter, if by any chance the population should be welded into a single nationality, then I do not say we ought to begin to fear for our dominion; I say we ought to cease at once to hope it.'[5]

This background was very obstructive to the Congress trying to build a united secular political community in India and demanding that the Indian people should be enabled to man their services and political institutions. Sir Syed had rightly complained that Muslims were far behind Hindus in higher English education. But the answer was not to obstruct the path of progress. He could not look ahead of the immediate interests of upper classes of the Muslim community; democracy in which 'commoners' would occupy high posts and sit in the legislative councils did not fit in with his autocratic and aristocratic background. To Muslims he was a great leader because he showed them a new way, the way of rehabilitating themselves under the inevitable British rule. He invoked all the resources available to him to put up opposition to the Congress. The anti-Congress Englishmen in Britain and India were there to gratify him in this role and support him.

The Times of London was the first vocal adversary of the Congress and the first to play up the Muslims against it. The report on the first Congress published by *The Times* in its news columns said: 'No Mohammedan took any part in the proceedings. That the entire Mohammedan population of India has steadily refused to have anything to do with them is a sufficiently ominous fact.' The report was mischievously made up. The first Congress was hurriedly assembled, and only two Muslims had attended it. But to convey an impression that the Muslims boycotted it was a travesty of truth. No Muslim meetings were held, no resolutions were adopted, and yet *The Times* told its readers that the Muslim community had 'refused to have anything to do with' the Congress!

[5] *Ibid*, p. 270

The Second Congress was attended by 33 Muslim delegates, the total number of delegates being 440. The proportionately smaller figure of Muslims was ascribed partly to the 'present lack of higher education' among Muslims and partly to the fact that three 'prominent Calcutta Mohammedans' (Calcutta was the venue of the second Congress) had publicly declared against the Congress, preferring 'a policy of confidence in Government'. But at the Congress session Nawab Raza Ali Khan Bahadur of Lucknow, one of the delegates, indignantly and eloquently denied that the Mohammedans were holding aloof from or lacked sympathy with the Congress. To quote him: 'The Association that has done the honour of deputing us is largely composed of leading Mohammedans, Nawabs, Wasikadars, political pensioners and scions of the once Royal House of Oudh, and I assure you that our Association and my brother Mohammedans, generally of Oudh, will utterly repudiate and condemn any unworthy attempt to create dissensions in our ranks. Hindus or Mohammedans, Parsees or Sikhs, we are one people now whatever our ancestors six or eight hundred years ago may have been, and our public interests are indivisible and identical.'

But *The Times* persisted in its design to antagonise Muslims against the Congress. Its comment on the second Congress was: 'The Mohammedan community appear to hold aloof from this kind of thing on the ground that they prefer not to hamper the Government at a time when it is doing its best for the natives of India. This incidentally shows what the real aims and results of the "National Indian Congress" are considered to be by the natives of India themselves; at the same time, adding another to the many proofs that we must look to our Mohammedan subjects for the most sensible and moderate estimate of our policy.'

The third Congress was presided over by an eminent Muslim, Budruddin Tyebji. Educated in London, he joined the Middle Temple and was called to the bar in 1867. He became a judge of the Bombay High Court in 1895. He was secretary of the Anjuman-e-Islam in 1880 and later its president. In 1882 he was nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council. He devoted a considerable portion of his presiden-

tial address to the Muslim problem as posed by Sir Syed. He said:

> It has been urged in derogation of our character as a representative national gathering that one great and important community—the Mussulman community—has kept aloof from the proceedings of the last two Congresses. Now, gentlemen, in the first place, this is only partially true and applies only to one particular part of India, and is moreover due to certain special, local and temporary causes (hear, hear and applause); and in the second place, no such reproach can, I think, with any show of justice be urged against this present Congress, and gentlemen, I must honestly confess to you that one great motive, which has induced me in the present state of my health to undertake the grave responsibilities of presiding over your deliberations, has been an earnest desire on my part to prove, as far as in my power lies, that I, at least not merely in my individual capacity but as representing the Anjuman-e-Islam of Bombay, do not consider that there is anything whatever in the position of the relations of the different communities of India—be they Hindus, Mussulmans, Parsis or Christians—which should induce the leaders of any one community to stand aloof from the others in their efforts to obtain those great general reforms, which are for the common benefit of us all.

Despite Sir Syed's opposition, the attendance of Muslims at Congress sessions was increasing year after year. At the 1888 Congress they were 221 as against 965 Hindus. And despite this development Sir Syed remained adamant. He reiterated in the same strain in reply to conciliatory endeavours made by Tyebji and Hume: 'I do not understand what the words "National Congress" mean. Is it supposed that the different castes and creeds living in India belong to one nation, can become a nation, and their aims and aspirations be one and the same? I think it is quite impossible. You regard the doings of the misnamed National Congress beneficial to India, but I am sorry to say that I regard them as not only

injurious to our own community but also to India at large. I object to every Congress, in any shape or form whatever, which regards India as one nation.'[6]

He was very seriously against the Congress, and as a counterblast to it, he organized the United Indian Patriotic Association whose membership was open to all communities—not to Muslims alone. 'I have undertaken a heavy task against the so-called National Congress,' he declared. His close associate in this adventure was Theodore Beck, the English principal of the M.A.O. College. They set forth the following aims: '(a) to publish and circulate pamphlets and other papers for information of members of Parliament, English journals and the people of Great Britain, in which those misstatements will be pointed out by which the supporters of the Indian National Congress have wrongly attempted to convince the English people that all the nations of India and the Indian chiefs and rulers agree with the aims and objects of the National Congress; (b) to inform members of Parliament and the newspapers of Great Britain and its people by the same means, of the opinions of Mohammedans in general, of the Islamia Anukans, and those Hindus and their societies which are opposed to the objects of the National Congress; (c) to strive to preserve peace in India and to strengthen the British rule; and to remove those bad feelings from the hearts of the Indian people, which the supporters of the Congress are stirring up throughout the country and by which great dissatisfaction is being raised among the people against the British Government.'[7]

Several other petty organizations came up in different parts of the country to frustrate the aims of the Congress and to lend support to the British. One of them, a Muslim organization, was the Anjuman Nasar-ul-Islam of Nagpur. It assumed a high spirit when Hume was carrying on an extensive propaganda and was involved in a heated correspondence

[6] Quoted in *Source Material for a History of Freedom Movement in India* Collected from Bombay Government Records, vol. II, 1885-1920 (1959), p. 71

[7] *Aligarh Institute Gazette,* August 28, 1888

with U. P. Governor Colvin. The Anjuman adopted the following resolution: 'This meeting is of the opinion that the objects and measures of the so-called National Congress tend towards raising a spirit of disloyalty and discontent and are likely to be most detrimental (1) to India in general, and (2) to the welfare and prosperity of Mohammedans in particular; that the demands of the Congress are not the demands of two hundred million British subjects; that its habitual assumption that it has the right to speak in the name of the majority of the people of India is fictitious and the grievances which it alleges are imaginary; that any Mohammedan of Nagpur joining or associating himself in any way with any Congress meeting to be held at Nagpur or allowing himself to be appointed as a delegate to the Allahabad Congress will be considered as representing himself alone and a renegade from the Muslim community.'[8] The meeting decided to send a copy of the resolution to Sir Syed, 'honorary secretary of the United Patriotic Association'.

The Congress was not yet a mass organization, but it was considered by most men of influence and understanding, both in India and Britain, as genuinely representative of Indian sentiment and opinion and as one which could only be ignored at some peril. There had been no lack, before it came into existence, of loyalist tuft-hunters who, ignoring the misery of the people and the growing unrest, misled the rulers and told them that all was well with the Indian people. The rulers were not unaware of the true state of things, and if some of them encouraged anti-Congress activities, it was with the intention that the Congress should, as far as possible, be prevented from becoming popular with the masses and from claiming that it represented the urges, feelings and needs of the people. It is not difficult for foreign rulers to secure in a dependency the kind of support Sir Syed and others were gathering for the British. Paradoxically, the Congress had become necessary as a bulwark against the lurking danger of discontent assuming a form of organized violence; the only safe strategy that could be thought of against it was to create something that

[8] *Ibid*, December 8, 1888

could challenge its authority, something in the nature of pin-pricks. In Britain, there was little support for the anti-reform theses. Liberal political thinkers and many members of Parliament unreservedly admitted that the voice raised by the Congress was a sane voice, that the demands it put forward were modest, and that the British could not rule India in the manner of a by-gone age. And Parliament had to sanction the reforms embodied in the Indian Councils Act of 1892, ignoring Sir Syed and others like him.

The Act of 1892 and the Rules made thereunder were designed to give factitious representation to Indians but actually gave, obviously in the interest of British rule, quite excessive and almost exclusive, representation to vested interests, like the landed aristocracy and the world of commerce in which Hindus happened to be predominant. In the Councils as they emerged both British rulers and Muslim leaders counted the number of Muslim members only to find that they were fewer than their proportion in the population. Amusingly enough, they were looking for a result which could not flow from the provisions of the Act and the Rules. Who was to blame for it? The evidence shows: the British, the framers of the Act in London, and the Viceroy in Calcutta.

The Congress resolution of 1889, in which a scheme of reforms was drawn up, specifically provided that 'wherever the Parsees, Christians, Mohammedans or Hindus are in a minority, the total number of Parsees, Christians, Mohammedans or Hindus, as the case may be, elected to the Provincial Legislatures, shall not, so far as may lie possible, bear a less proportion to the total number of members elected thereto than the total number of Parsees, Christians, Hindus or Mohammedans, as the case may be in such electoral jurisdiction bear to the total population.' Lord Dufferin, in his recommendations for the expansion of the Legislative Councils and the introduction of an Indian element, had described (vide his Minute annexed to the Government of India's Despatch of November 6, 1888) the population of India as 'composed of a large number of distinct nationalities professing various religions, practising diverse rites, speaking different languages, while many of them are still further separated from

one another by discordant prejudices, by conflicting social usages, and even antagonistic material interest.'

These views were re-echoed during the debates in Parliament on the Bill (1892). One of the speakers, Lord Kimberley, said: 'The notion of a Parliamentary representation of so vast a country—almost as large as Europe—containing so large a number of different races is one of the wildest imaginations that ever entered the minds of men.' He went on to emphasize the necessity of ascertaining the feelings of 'a most important body, the Mohammedans of India. If you were to be guided entirely by the Hindu popular opinion, you would find yourself in great difficulty.' A dozen speeches emphasized, without mentioning the Congress, that the best way to provide for Indian representation was by allotment of seats to different interests, communal and professional, and not the one suggested by the Congress and supported by Muslims on the Congress platform. Both Lord Dufferin and his successor, the Marquis of Lansdowne, had promised protection of Muslim rights. The former had told a deputation of the Central Mohammedan Association on March 24, 1888: 'The Mohammedans of India may rest assured that the Government will always view with the utmost sympathy and approval their endeavours to remove the peculiar impediments which hamper their efforts.' The latter's reply to a similar deputation made on December 22, 1888 was to the same effect.

In the period immediately preceding the Act of 1892 confusion was the most flourishing commodity in Indian politics. The Congress was avowedly a secular body; and yet it proposed a system of election that would ensure proportional representation to Muslims as also to other religious communities. This non-secular approach was forced on the Congress by the prevailing attitude of some leading Muslims, the most considerable of them being Sir Syed. Hume was one of those who did not like the 'minority clause' and asked it to be cut out. 'Indians are Indians', he said; 'why should there be majority or minority ?' An extreme protest to this came from a Muslim delegate, Wajid Ali Biwaji, who in an excited tone demanded that 'the number of Muslim members in the councils should be thrice that of the Hindus.' Hidayat Rasul, a Muslim of Oudh,

proposed that although the Hindu population was a majority, the number of Hindu and Muslim members in a council should be equal. They were opposed by two of their own co-religionists. Hamid Ali Khan, Bar-at-Law (of Lucknow) asserted that 'no such question as Hindus or Mohammedans' should be raised. The other opposer said: 'We have assembled here for one common object. On such an occasion the Mohammedans cannot call themselves Mohammedans, nor Hindus Hindus, but rather forgetting all differences of creed, caste and colour, we should call ourselves Indians.' When Hidayat Rasul's amendment was put to vote, even the Muslim delegates voted against it. The Congress was caught up in a dilemma. It had to take notice of the undesirable parties arrayed against it and ensured the continuance of Muslims in the organization by incorporating communal representation in the reform resolution.

The confusion in the British mind was of a different kind. They had no plan to develop democratic institutions in India, for they had no intention to part with power. To them the expansion of the legislative councils was a way of diverting the Indian mind from practical activity to expression of unrest by tongue. Their aim was to prolong British rule in India and to exploit to this end India's diverse political manifestations. They knew that the scheme of indirect elections to the councils framed by the Viceroy would not give the Muslims proportionate representation, but they were indifferent to the consequence. Perhaps they believed that the Muslims would be further estranged from the Congress and thus provide them with another excuse to put the nationalists off. May be they allowed the matters to drift. In any case, the coming together of Hindus and Muslims in a united secular party was not to be in their interest. When Lord Ripon introduced his local self-government scheme, he did not think of Hindus and Muslims as two separate political communities, and the elections were held under a system of joint electorate. The system held out the hope of a single political community being evolved in the years to come. A Muslim delegate at the Congress of 1890, Syed Sarfuddin, gave a graphic picture of the early stage of the hope. He said: 'Look at the very city of

Patna. There are twenty seats in the municipality, but inspite of the Hindus being in a majority, they elect more Muslims. Out of the twenty municipal commissioners, thirteen are Muslims. In Bombay Hindus are in overwhelming majority; still five Parsis, three Europeans, two Hindus and two Muslims represent the municipality.' If the communal bogey had not been stirred up and the British had helped and not hampered the growth of a secular community, the Act of 1892 would have become the starting point of the growth of secular political activity in the councils instead of being the starting point of the division of Hindus and Muslims into two political entities.

There is definite indication in the events of the future that the British wanted the divisive tendencies to flourish with their help.

5

Seeds of Unrest

Any impartial analyst of the political events of the last two decades of the 19th century and of the commanding part of the men involved in them can safely declare that the few Englishmen genuinely interested in the welfare of India were impatient with the slowness and smallness of the progress the Congress was making, while the Indian leaders in command were very mild, moderate and cautious. In one sphere of life or another, these leaders had close associations with Government agencies; and a critic might suggest that they could not afford to offend Government beyond a certain limit. Two examples will illustrate the suggestion.

It was an Englishman of Manchester, R. D. Rusden, who was irritated at the adoption by the Congress and its provincial conferences of meek resolutions against the salt tax and wrote in the columns of B. G. Tilak's English weekly, *Mahratta* (July 21, 1889): 'The time has come to say to the Government: This is an abominable tax.... If you do not repeal it, we will try and make it so hot and disagreeable for you that before long you will have to drop it. Speak clearly in this way; never mind your "loyalty" which some of you think a good deal too much about; throw it to the dogs; "loyalty" to a government that imposes a salt tax is only another word for neglect.... Speak clearly and emphasise your words by organizing a plan of campaign against the salt tax.... Advise your people to avoid the tax.' The advice was too hot to be heeded by Indian leaders to whom it was addressed.

On February 16, 1892 Hume addressed a circular letter 'to every member of the Congress Party' in the country. The following are the pertinent excerpts from it: 'A very large

number of you seem almost as behind as the Government. You do not, especially the rich and well-to-do, realize that the existing system of administration is not only ill-adapted to the wants of the country, is not only pauperizing the people, but inevitably preparing the way for one of the most terrible cataclysms in the history of the world.... Do not fancy that the Government will be able to protect you or itself. No earthly power can stem an universal agrarian rising in a country like this.... There will be no foe to meet in the field, but rail and road will become impassable, bridges will be wrecked, telegraphs will cease to exist, thousands of rioters may be killed, but to what avail, when there are millions on millions who have nothing to look forward to, but death; nothing to hope for but vengeance.' Hume only meant to forewarn the people through the Congress; if they did not bestir themselves energetically and compel the Government to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, the masses would be provoked to destroy all symbols of authority. The letter was read with surprise and alarm by Indian leaders and eventually suppressed. Several standing committees of the Congress in the provinces sent to Hume long letters of protest.

The Allahabad Committee said: 'We fully understand that such a publication would be considered wholly harmless in England.... You know, however, how different India is from England, and with what hostility the expression of such opinions is treated here.' The Committee's letter 'begged' Hume 'to reconsider the matter and to stop the circulation of the letter by wiring to all those committees and individuals to whom it may have been sent to return all the copies of it to you.' In Bombay when the letter was shown to the president of the committee, Pherozeshah Mehta, the greatest Indian leader of Bombay, he 'at once' asked the secretary to 'send an urgent telegram in his name begging Mr. Hume to withdraw' it. And when Hume again asked the secretary to lay the matter before the Bombay Standing Committee, there was no more reference made to Hume, and the committee 'formally declined to circulate the letter'.

In London the British Committee of the Indian National Congress showed the same attitude. In a resolution it said:

'This Committee having before it the full text of a circular letter issued by Mr. Allan O. Hume to every member of the Congress party, the substance of which was cabled by *The Times* correspondent yesterday, express their deep regret that such a letter should have been circulated and their entire repudiation of the wild language and the unjustifiable conclusions drawn by Mr. Hume.' Dadabhai Naoroji was one of those who signed the letter with which the resolution was sent for publication to *The Times*.

It was again an Englishman, Eardly Norton, who justified the circular letter and supported Hume. In a lecture 'on the Indian National Congress' he said, 'he had read the circular over and over again, up and down and inside out,' and he could not 'find one single trace in the manifesto which justified the most caustic critic in saying that Mr. Hume acted with any hostility towards the Government of India. On the contrary Mr. Hume's manifesto was based on the facts that they were what they were.'[1]

And there were, let there be no misunderstanding, Englishmen like J. M. Maclean, a member of Parliament, to whom the Congress was 'a seditious gathering' and Hume 'a traitor'. He said on the floor of Parliament that 'under a less mild rule than ours Hume would be hanged or shot as a traitor.'

Hume did not budge from the circular and in an explanation published through the columns of *The Times* (April 29, 1892) he further elucidated the fear to which he had given expression: 'I have been through the Indian Mutiny and know what it was. I have seen one period of anarchy in India and I do not want to see another. I have lived 43 years in India. I have served in the Administration from the lowest to all but the highest grade, and since my retirement have moved amongst the Indians in every province of the Empire for some 11 years in a way that no other European living has done. I affirm, and the people of India will ratify my assertion, that there is no man, European or Indian, at this present day who possesses such an intimate knowledge of what is going on

[1] *Bombay Gazette*, dated April 28, 1892

below the surface among the masses in India as I do. I have a right to be heard, and when I warn the people of India and of England of the impending danger, it is futile to meet my assertion by personal charges that are manifestly absurd.'

He chastised the authorities for living 'in a fool's paradise' and invoked John Bright's following words to support his contention: 'It may be said, "Let us leave the great Indian problem to solve itself." Well, leave it and it will solve itself, I do not doubt, in some terrible disaster to India, and some sore and lasting disgrace to England. It is the great question which is coming up—it cannot be denied, step by step it draws nearer.' Hume added after quoting Bright: 'The crisis has now drawn nearer than when Mr. Bright spoke. The way to hasten it is by a policy of contemptuous refusal to listen to the reasonable and temperately expressed prayers of the Indian people.'

A good deal of experience and fear was hidden below the feeling expressed by the Allahabad committee that 'India is different from England' so far as the rulers were concerned. Indians had had frequent occasions to see that many Englishmen in India, whether rulers or traders, behaved like wild brutes, giving any civilized man the impression that they had never been associated with a cultured society. English-educated Indians had been brought up in an atmosphere of aspiration for association with Government and developed a sense of submission, one may say, to a questionable degree. They had not been taught to challenge the ruler or his comrade in business should he behave like a wild brute over an activity or expression distasteful to him. Englishmen suffered from no such fear complex, and that was the reason why a Hume, a Bright or a Rusden could fearlessly speak out the truth, which Indians shuddered even to repeat. Some of the Indian newspaper editors no doubt were as truthful and as outspoken in their writings as Englishmen like Hume, Bright and Rusden; but the Indian leaders of the Congress repudiated them as intemperate and lacking requisite discrimination. To them the expanding of the Congress movement meant the joining of a larger number of educated people in the submission of prayers to the British Government. Hume was perhaps

more loyal conscientiously to the British Crown and wanted the Indian people also to be loyal as he emphatically asked in his controversial letter; but to him the exposure of the rampant discontent and smouldering unrest as a means of enforcing the demand for political rights for the Indians was an essential point.

British rulers reacted in a peculiar way to the threat of violence as against actual violence. They considered themselves capable of fighting a violent attack made on them and were usually confident of winning in the end; but the lurking threat of violence had the effect of turning them to the right action. They also saw the light of reason after the overt recourse to violence had become manifest. In the decade before the Revolt of 1857 the several mutinies of Indian soldiers had been ruthlessly suppressed by them, and after all was over the demands whose earlier rejection had provoked the mutinies were conceded. The association of Indians with the legislative councils had been demanded before the Revolt, but this mild and harmless demand was conceded only after thousands of people had been massacred and inhuman cruelties perpetrated. It was the latent threat of equal violence in the late seventies that set the rulers thinking and led to the birth of the Congress and eventually to the grant of the insignificant reforms of 1892. The constitutional agitation in India and England was of course a supplementary factor.

To study the post-1892 Indian politics in the background of this analysis, one will have to divide them into three parts: (1) the mild, submissive petitioning of the Congress enlivened now and then by angry, though factual, speeches; (2) the more straightforward agitation outside the Congress conducted primarily under the leadership of B. G. Tilak, himself a Congress leader; (3) terrorism seeking to make the rulers feel that they were not safe in India. There was yet another section, quite important in its own way; it was the Press, whose vigorous campaigning bore witness to much greater restlessness than that in evidence on Congress platforms.

As already indicated, the Congress continued to behave like a mild opposition party, criticising the Government and demanding changes in the administrative set-up and legisla-

tive machinery; and it continued to enlist support of important Englishmen in Britain. Dadabhai Naoroji, who was chosen to preside over the Congress of 1892 (held at Lahore), was in England at that time; he had a little while before contested and won a parliamentary seat. Before leaving for India he contacted such members of Parliament as were likely to be friendly to India and secured 'solid support' of about 80 Irish and radical members. Their spokesman, Davitt, told him: 'Don't forget to tell your colleagues at the Congress that every one of Ireland's Home Rule Members in Parliament is at your back in the cause of the Indian people.'

Naoroji, who came to be called 'the Grand Old Man of India', had a generation's record of public service. The young and old all adored him; while being taken to the site of the Lahore Congress in a carriage drawn by horses, a number of students came running, loosened the horses, and themselves pulled the presidential carriage. The honour given him showed unmistakably that a parallel authority—parallel to the British—was taking birth in India. To quote from Sir William Hunter's letter in *The Times*, Naoroji 'had a welcome on landing such as has only on one occasion been rivalled even by a Viceregal ovation. His reception at Lahore has perhaps not been surpassed since the days of Ranjit Singh.'

In his own dignified way he exposed, in his presidential address, the hollowness of the 1892 Act:

> By the Act of 1861, without the permission of the Governor-General, no member can introduce any measure (which virtually amounts to exclusion) about matters affecting the public debt or public revenues or for imposing any charge on such revenues, or the discipline and maintenance of any part of Her Majesty's Military or Naval Forces. This means that, as far as the spending of our money is concerned, the Legislative Council is simply as if it did not exist at all. (Cries of shame, shame.) No motion can be made by any member unless such motion be for leave to introduce some measure or have reference to some measure actually introduced thereunto. Thus there is no opportunity of calling any Department or

> Government to account for their acts. All things which shall be done by the Secretary of State shall have the same force and validity as if this Act had not been passed. Here is full arbitrary power.
>
> By the Act of 1892, no member shall have power to submit or propose any resolution or to divide the Council in respect of any such financial discussion or the answer to any question asked under this Act. Such is the poor character of the extent of concession made to discuss finances or to put questions. Rules made under this Act shall not be subject to alteration or amendment at meetings for the purpose of making laws and regulations.

Similar plain but innocuous speaking was done by several delegates on the economic condition. Madan Mohan Malaviya, destined to grow to a great stature in the 20th century, said at the same session: 'Where are the weavers, where are those men who lived by different industries and manufactures, and where are the manufactures which were sent to England and other European countries in very large quantities year after year? All that has become a thing of the past. Everyone sitting here is clothed in cloth of British make, almost everyone, and wherever you go you find British manufactures and British goods staring you in the face. All that is left to the people is to drag out a miserable existence by agricultural operations and make infinitesimal profit out of the little trade left to them. In the matter of the services, in the matter of trade, our people are not enjoying one-hundredth part of the profit and gain which they used to enjoy fifty years ago. How then is it possible for the country to be happy?'[2]

The authorities were watchful enough not to let criticism exceed a certain limit. When they found Congressman G. Subrahmanya Aiyar crossing the limit, they put him in jail and released him only when he was a physical wreck. He was a keen student of economics, and had reminded the people that 200 million rupees worth of gold that the mines of Kolar yielded annually was sent to England and asserted that a time would come when only stones would be left in Madras! Gopal

[2] Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 42

Krishna Gokhale, another great leader of the future like Malaviya, was made to taste a lesser degree of official resentment and displeasure. The Congress had been demanding that the competitive examination for the Civil Service, which used to be held in England, should be held simultaneously in India as well. Instead of granting this request the British Government further cut the little avenues of service open to Indians. The Congress of 1893 again reiterated the old demand. Speaking on this resolution Gokhale suggested that 'unless this regime of distrust is soon changed...darker days cannot but be in store for this poor country.' Compared to Hume's 'outburst' Gokhale's warning was a mild affair; and yet he 'was looked on as an enemy and followed by police spies.'[3] It was no small punishment to a confirmed moderate like Gokhale.

The Congress movement had made practically no impression on British rulers in India. They even flouted the House of Commons if any direction from it meant a departure from their own policy; and they prevailed upon the Secretary of State for India to uphold them. In 1893 the House of Commons conceded the Congress demand for simultaneous civil service examination in England and India; but the Secretary of State declined to give effect to it contending that the Commons resolutions had been passed by a snap vote. He invited opinions from the Government of India and the provincial Governments. As he no doubt expected, all the Governments, with the exception of Madras, opposed the resolution, and very jubilantly he consigned it to the archives. Indians were deliberately insulted because they were meek and submissive. Any European could think of entering and actually entered the Indian Civil Service; but Indians could not do so freely. Bismark was once tempted to take up a lucrative job in India; to quote him: 'I wanted to take service in India under the English flag; then I thought after all, what harm have the Indians done me?'[4]

The Congress continued to perform what it thought to be

[3] *Ibid*, p. 147

[4] Quoted in Bertrand Russell, *Freedom and Organization*, p. 416

its duty to the country. The 1894 session was presided over by Alfred Webb, M. P., an Irishman. In the light of the figures he marshalled in his presidential address, the legislative 'reform' of 1892 looked a downright sham. He told the delegates: 'Your taxes spent abroad have risen from Rs. 17,369,000 in 1882 by 31 per cent to Rs. 22,911,000 in 1892.... No country could permanently afford such a drain.' He added that the aggregate annual savings of the United Kingdom in the years between 1840 and 1888 were estimated at £110,000,000 or over £300,000 a day. Where did this wealth and prosperity come from? The answer obviously was, India.

As if in supercilious disdain of the talkers at the Congress sessions, the Government proposed just then two fresh imposts. One was the countervailing excise duty on Indian cotton manufactures designed to benefit British manufactures. The other was the levy of an arbitrary penalty in the shape of the costs of the punitive police force quartered in disturbed areas. The Congress, of course, ceremoniously passed a resolution deploring the imposts.

India at this time needed a leader who could give occasional shocks to the slowly-moving chariot of the moderates, stir the masses into political consciousness, and impress on the British mind that they would in future have to deal with an extreme variety of political activity. And it found one in B.G. Tilak, who was respectfully called Lokamanya Tilak by his grateful countrymen. He had not to create the wherewithal. It was already there, and he had only to make proper use of it. Most of the men who constituted the material were Chitpavan Brahmans, about whom a British author, Valentine Chirol, made the following observation:

> Their great administrative abilities compelled recognition, and Chitpavans swarm today in every Government office of the Deccan as they did in the days of Nana Phadanavis, himself a Chitpavan. Among them are to be found many of the most enlightened and progressive Indians of our times and many have served the British Raj with unquestioned loyalty and integrity. But amongst many others—perhaps indeed amongst the great majority—

> there has undoubtedly been preserved for the last hundred years from the time of the downfall of the Peshwa domination to the present day, an unbroken tradition of hatred towards British rule, an undying hope that it might some day be subverted and their own ascendancy restored. Not to go back to the exploits of Nana Sahib and his followers during the Mutiny, or to the Ramosi rebellion round Poona in 1879, it was in Poona that the native Press, mainly conducted by Brahmans, first assumed that tone of virulent hostility towards the British rule and British rulers which led to the Press Act of 1878.[5]

When Tilak entered upon public life in the early eighties, Ranade was a renowned leader in the Bombay Presidency. Ranade was a cool-headed moderate, but Tilak was impatient of all restraint and in opposition to Ranade he took the political platform more extreme in character. He applied himself whole-heartedly to his self-appointed mission of mentally preparing the people to strike at the British authority in India by creating in their minds hatred towards it. 'He extolled', again to quote the same author, 'the merits of "direct action", he despised the Parliamentary methods of agitation which had hitherto characterised the Congress. In short, he was the real founder of the left-wing party in India.' He knew the psychology of his people; he knew their religious fervour; and he knew that the material readily available consisted mostly of Hindus. His approach to politics was secular as any student of his life and work will perhaps unhesitatingly declare; he made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims and was prepared to go to any extent to accommodate Muslim demands. Yet he chose his province Maharashtra's most popular deity, Ganapati, to preside over his mass contact political activity. The opportunity came to him in peculiar circumstances—after a Hindu-Muslim riot. *The Bombay City Gazetteer* (a Government publication) contains the following account of the riot:

> On the 11th August, 1893, very serious Hindu-Mohammedan riot took place. Fears of an outbreak had been

[5] *Indian Unrest*, p. 40

prevalent for a few weeks previously; and shortly after midday on the date mentioned, a large concourse of Mohammedans issued from the Jama Masjid and with shouts of Din Din* commenced to attack a Hindu temple in Hanuman Lane. Within a very short time the whole of Parel, Kamattipura, Grant Road, Chinchpokli were given over to mob-law. The tumult was enormous. Not only did the Musalmans attack all Hindus they met; but the latter retaliated and both sides rounded on the police. Sticks and stones were the only weapons employed by the rioters, but they were used in many instances with murderous effect. Little care was taken by the Mohammedans to limit their aim to the enemies of the faith and passing tram-cars and conveyances were freely pelted irrespective of the race of the passengers. The crowds, raging from street to street, desecrated Hindu temples, broke the idols, and inflicted savage assaults on the Hindu population. The main cause of the outbreak was the infection spread by riots which had broken out in other parts of India.

Clashes between Hindus and Muslims were few and far between in the past even under British rule. But curiously enough they appeared after every reform in the legislative councils beginning with that of 1892; and responsible Indians, even responsible Englishmen, suggested that they were engineered by British authorities.

After the rioting was over Tilak took up the matter in his Marathi weekly, *Kesari*, and blamed the British rather than the Muslims, adding that sensible Muslims neither participated in the rioting nor encouraged it. For many many years, the Hindus had participated in the Muslim festival of Moharrum with great zeal. They used to contribute liberally to the Moharrum fund. As the hot winds quickly dry up the sprinkled water so did these riots dry up the fountain of affection from which had flown communal good-will for a long time. They stopped taking interest in the *tabut* procession, and devoted their thinking to finding a Hindu alternative to Moharrum. They recalled that during the Peshwa regime they

* Help religion, Help religion

had in the Ganesh or Ganapati celebrations an annual festival which had assumed a national character. After the extinction of the Maratha rule it had died out as a popular festival and was reduced to a mere flummery confined to family circles.

Tilak's guidance was sought for the conduct of the new popular venture. He saw in the proposed public celebration of the Ganapati festival the medium of arousing in the people the spirit of nationalism. He thought that Muslims might also be attracted to it on realizing that the ultimate aim was not religious but political; and many Muslims actually were. In two years the Ganapati grew into a grand national festival, though largely limited to Maharashtra, with Muslims rubbing shoulders with Hindus in the celebrations in several towns. 'Ganpati societies were formed in all the chief centres of the Deccan. Each had its choir and its dramatic society. And at the festival dramas were acted and songs were sung in which the ancient legends were employed to arouse hatred against the foreigner.... Legendary characters were employed. But everyone understood the allegory. A weak Government in England has given the Viceroy a free hand. He has made use of it to insult and humiliate India. The Moderates advocate constitutional measures. The extremists bide their time till the ineffectiveness of these gentle methods has been proved. Then they adopt violent methods. The tyrant is disposed of without difficulty, and his followers massacred. Then, having freed their country, the extremists are able to defend it against all invaders. Such was the allegory which the crowded audiences could easily see, and they would scowl at the tyrant, scorn the tameness of the Moderates, admire the courage of the extremists, and hum with satisfaction at the slaughter of the tyrants. The power of drama was well used by Tilak to impress his standpoint.'[6]

At the theatrical performances the Europeans were referred to as Mlekshas (barbarians) and those who co-operated with them were condemned as enemies of the motherland. Tumultuous processions were taken out, and the opportunity was availed of to hurl slogans at the police which irritated them

[6] Sir Francis Younghusband, *Dawn in India,* pp. 36-7

and sometimes led to judicial proceedings. Any such action by the authorities was used as another occasion for demonstrations and awakening the masses. Ganapati was adopted as a patron god by schoolboys and college students. The legend of that god slaying the demon *Gajasura* was interpreted by worshippers as deliverance of the people from their national oppressors. The students, who were drawn to the movement, were soon organized into athletic clubs. One of these developed into a well-known political organization, the Abhinav Bharat, which produced several revolutionary leaders like V. D. Savarkar. As time passed hundreds of organizations were formed at different places in Maharashtra and even beyond its borders. By 1905 there were 72 towns, besides Poona, which regularly celebrated the festival with all its political overtones. These included Madras, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Mathura, Benares, Dwarka, Karachi and Calcutta.

Two years later (in 1895) Tilak invoked the Indian history's popular hero, Shivaji, and held him up before the people as an exemplar. This was to be his second movement. For this also the idea came from others. Early in 1895 a chance article in the weekly *Native Opinion* called attention to the forgotton tomb of Shivaji. The writer of the article had complained that he had recently seen the deplorable condition of the 'shrine of Maharaja Shivaji at Raigarh' and that it was regrettable that nobody paid attention to it. Tilak's national pride was aroused; he feelingly said: 'A good many days have elapsed since we heard Joshi's verse—"Do resound the name of Shivaji". Alas! no one is now acting on his advice.' And he started acting on it. Through the *Kesari* he announced the establishment of a fund and told its readers: 'It is a fine specimen of Maratha patriotism that meagre subscriptions of an anna or two should be offered for repairing the tomb of such a great warrior as Shivaji.'

For two months intensive propaganda was carried on throughout Maharashtra. It culminated on May 30 in a public meeting at Poona. It was a grand meeting. In the opinion of the *Sudharak*, a weekly antagonistic to Tilak, 'never in the annals of the historic city of Poona was there ever seen, since the advent of British rule, the like of it.' Another weekly,

Indu Prakash, said: 'No surer sign of the rising national spirit can be imagined than the meeting held at Poona to take measures to commemorate fittingly the name of Shivaji.'

The whole of Maharashtra was now throbbing with energy; an unprecedented tide of nationalism was surging in its veins. Never after Shivaji was this land so solidly behind one leader. Once again, as during Shivaji's time, there was to be seen the same zeal, the same oneness of purpose, the same ambition; that is, the country could no more brook bad rule and foreign domination. Shivaji was the people's rallying point and Tilak their preceptor.

In 1896 the Shivaji movement made remarkable progress. A public festival in commemoration of the birthday of the hero was celebrated right at the top of the Raigarh Fort (on April 15). The Fort, situated on a steep eminence, was not easily accessible. There were no buildings on the top but bare foundations and walls, relics of magnificent palaces of old. The task of holding a big festival at such an out-of-the-way place was by no means an easy one. But Tilak wanted to test the measure of patriotism of his people and chose that place which in itself was an object of great inspiration.

Over 6,000 people from various parts of Maharashtra gathered at the Fort. This was a big number considering that only those with sturdy physique could negotiate the steep ascent. In the night a procession, interspersed with torch bearers with portraits of Shivaji and his inspired preceptor Ramdas, was taken out with great pomp and awe. 'Probably since the coronation of Shivaji, which was held over 250 years ago', the papers said commenting on the function 'there had been no function similar to the one held this year.'

Tilak appeared to be proceeding according to a certain plan in his mental bag. He would not afford to let the progress of the spirit he was engendering falter by the kind of terror which Government could at any moment strike. While showing by all possible signs that the people should fight for Home Rule, he professed loyalty to British Rule. The rulers knew the real truth but had no legal means to proceed against him. The Bombay Government later expressed their opinion in these words: 'In 1895 following up his policy of enlisting

religious feeling in the cause of revolution, Tilak inaugurated the Ganapati celebrations, which have since annually been made the occasion of demonstrations against the British Government. About the same time the cult of Shivaji was introduced, and though Tilak at first denied any intention of using it for the subversion of British rule, it has become, as it was doubtless intended to become, an incitement to the expulsion of the English rule from India. As Shivaji drove out the Moghuls, so his worshippers are to drive out the English. It may be noted that at this time Tilak began to advocate the disuse of cloth of English manufacture, and was thus the originator of the later boycott and Swadeshi movement.'

A disciple of Tilak, Vishnu Bopardikar, carried the Shivaji movement to Calcutta. He brought together (on November 22, 1895) many Bengalis under the presidentship of Hirendranath Dutt, and the meeting resolved that 'to raise a monument to Shivaji, the Great, is the first duty of all duties that are imposed on the sons of India.' He even got the President of the 1895 Congress (held at Poona), Surendranath Banerjea, interested in the Shivaji movement. Banerjea was called to address a mammoth public meeting. He said: 'My first feeling is one of intense admiration for those gentlemen who have organized this vast, this enthusiastic, this unparalled demonstration in favour of Shivaji movement. The reflection which at the present moment, at the sight of this imposing demonstration, occurs to my mind is this—what may not be expected from the organizers of a movement like this in the cause of national advancement and progress?' Leaders from different parts of the country spoke at the congregation; and Tilak was happy that he had succeeded in popularising the Shivaji festival as a truly national movement.

Before going on to the writings published in his weekly which led to Tilak's conviction in 1897 the reader must have an idea of the earlier events.

In 1895 Tilak and his followers had captured the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona, which had for many years been dominated by Ranade whose leadership nobody had the courage to question. This event coincided with the appearance of a severe famine in the Bombay Presidency. The anxiety of the

people was depicted at the site of the Poona Congress in an unusual manner. A gaunt and emaciated figure of an Indian peasant was placed by some agriculturists near the pavilion. It was some 20 feet in height and carried a huge placard bearing legends relating to the cultivators' grievances in its hand. Near the figure was put up the representation of a village *chowpal** where the cultivators were shown to be engaged in an animated discussion of their depressed condition. They seemed to say that they were being crushed to death beneath a three-fold burden, the Government, the moneylender and the priest, and that if no relief was offered to them soon they would be so infuriated as to do something to throw off the yoke. Tilak told the Congress: 'It has been conclusively shown that in a number of cases the assessment has been increased by two hundred to four hundred per cent and in some cases by even 700 per cent, and it has been brought to the notice of Government that enhancements are higher than the limitations set down in the resolution of the Secretary of State for India.' Added to this burden was the collection of revenue made from famine-stricken peasants whose crop had been destroyed and who were entitled to relief under the Famine Code.

When all appeals to Government failed, Tilak started a lawful no-rent campaign. He called together the workers of the Sarvajanik Sabha and asked them to go into the villages and tell them that under the Famine Code itself they could refuse payment of land revenue. He told the people through the columns of *Kesari*: 'Will you, when the Queen desires that none should die, when the Governor declares that all should live and the Secretary of State is prepared to incur debt if necessary—will you kill yourself by timidity and starvation? If you have money to pay Government dues, pay them by all means. But if you have not, will you sell your things away only to avoid the supposed wrath of subordinate Government officers? Can you not be bold even when in the grip of death? We can stand any number of famines, but what shall we do with sheepish people?' To those who spoke of looting

* A meeting place

the bazars he said: 'Why loot the bazars? Go to the Collector and tell him to give you work and food. That is his duty.'

An atmosphere for the proper reception to the Sabha's workers having thus been created, they went to the villagers with their bundles of literature—provisions of the Famine Code. They first asked the District Collectors to undertake the distribution of the literature, pleading that it was the duty of Government to acquaint the people with the provision of relief existing in the law. This was interpreted as a request to Government agencies to carry out the behest of the agitators. Not surprisingly, the request was rejected and the workers approached the peasants, gave them the pamphlets, and explained to them their right to refuse payment. Some of them were arrested, but the method prescribed by Tilak was so clever that the prosecution failed.

The campaign had a disturbing effect on the local Government; there was a feeling of a distinct falling off in Government prestige. The Anglo-Indian community, led by *The Times of India*, was indignant. They said that the disturbing factor in India was not the famine but the agents of the Sarvajanik Sabha. In anger the Government adopted a resolution declaring that 'the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, as at present constituted, must cease to be recognized as a body which has any claim to address Government on questions of policy.' Tilak's English weekly, *Mahratta* (March 21, 1897) made a sensible retort: 'The Government may or may not favourably consider any petition sent to it, but that does not preclude any one from addressing Government on questions of public policy. The Sabha was not created by a Government resolution and it cannot be abolished by it.'

The Congress of 1896 (held at Calcutta) discussed the famine, but the discussion was not followed up by any resolution for practical work. Tilak was disappointed and expressed himself frankly in the *Kesari* (January 12, 1896): 'For the last twelve years we have been shouting (ourselves) hoarse desiring that Government should hear us. But our shouting has had no more effect on the Government than the sound of a gnat. Our rulers disbelieve our statements or profess to do so. Let us now try to force our grievances into

their ears by strong constitutional means. We must give the best political education possible to the ignorant villagers. We must meet them on terms of equality, teach them their rights and show how to fight constitutionally. Then only will the Government realize that to despise the Congress is to despise the Indian nation. Such a work will require a large body of able and single-minded workers, to whom politics would not mean some holiday recreation but an every-day duty.'

Verily, the Congress was in effect a 'holiday recreation' meeting once a year, passing resolutions and dispersing to meet again with nothing to do during the year.

Early in 1897 Tilak, through the columns of his two weeklies, intensified his anti-Government campaign and invited the wrath of the Anglo-Indian Press and the bureaucracy. They all demanded his prosecution and vehemently asserted that nothing short of it would satisfy them. And a prosecution was actually launched. The following extracts from his articles will give some idea of his continuous campaign: 'The dwarfing influence of the British Raj has turned the backbone of Maharashtra and Konkan, once forming the famous cavalry of the Deccan and the navy of Konkan, their country's pride, into a mere servile class of field labourers destined now to work like slaves for the luxuries of the omnipotent bureaucracy —luxuries far surpassing in vanity and folly the fabulous pleasures of the mighty demons of yore described by the most exuberant fancy of this land of poets.'—(*Mahratta*, May 23, 1897) 'Whatever be the reason for the deterioration of this country, none can deny the fact that a hundred years ago eminent warriors, statesmen and politicians were born in this country, and if anybody possessed vigour, learning or intelligence, there was then full scope to be obtained for his development. But now not only have all these qualities been rendered useless by the superior lustre of the British rule, but disuse is leading to their extinction, and we are becoming so weak and lifeless that anybody may lord it over us or tyrannize us all, or one might say, we have already become so. Unfortunately we are having a daily experience of how the people of a country degenerate when continually pressed under the roller of foreign yoke.... The native states are also being

humiliated at every step and have fallen from the rank of allies of the British Government to the position of subjugated people; and none appears to possess any energy or vigour. In brief the country which had some activity a hundred years ago has now become completely helpless and poor.'—(*Kesari*, June 22, 1897)

Then came the articles on the Shivaji festival which were chosen for Tilak's prosecution. That year, owing to plague, the festival was not held on the birthday of Shivaji but on his coronation day, which fell on June 13. On that day and on the previous and subsequent days a long programme of prayers, hymn-singing, sermon-preaching, and lecturing was gone through. At the public meeting, Professor Paranjpe read out the *Puran*. He had for the text of his reading the story in the *Mahabharat* about the exasperation on his return home of the ambitious Suyodhana at the sight of the Rajasuya sacrifice performed by Dharmaraja, his thoughts in that connection and the conversation he had with Shakuni Mama and Dhritarashtra on the subject. The professor, with a view to giving his audience a clear idea of the Rajasuya sacrifice, compared it with the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The dissertation on how even a man in affluent circumstances prefers death to the indignity of being trampled under the foot of his enemies and how a discontented man secures co-operation and makes up for the lack of arms and missiles by his craftiness and on other matters was specially impressive.

That very night a lecture on 'The Killing of Afzal Khan' was delivered by another lieutenant of Tilak, Professor Bhanu, under the presidentship of Tilak. The professor refuted the charge of 'murder' which English historians brought against Shivaji. 'How can English writers', he asked, 'have the audacity to applaud Clive and Warrern Hastings who were incomparably inferior to the Maharaja (Shivaji) and whose careers were fraught with foul deeds? Even if the Maharaja had committed fifty more crimes, more terrible than those which historians allege he did, I would still profoundly prostrate a hundred times before his image.'

The *Kesari* published an elaborate account of the function and also some Marathi verses entitled 'Shivaji's Utterances',

which put the following inspiring speech into the mouth of Shivaji:

> By annihilating the wicked I lightened the great weight on the terraqueous globe. I delivered the country by establishing Swarajya and by saving religion. I betook myself to heaven to shake off the great exhaustion which had come upon me. I was asleep; why then did you, my darlings, awaken me? I had planted upon this soil the virtues that may be likened to the Kalpavriksha (one of the five trees of God Indra's heaven which yields whatever is desired) of sublime policy based on a strong foundation, valour in the battlefield like that of *Karma*, patriotism, genuine dauntlessness, and unity, the best of all. Perhaps you now wish to show me the delicious fruits of these. Alack! what is this? I see the fort has crumbled down. Through misfortune I get a broken stone to sit upon. Why does not my heart break like that this day? Alas! Alas! I now see with my own eyes the ruin of my country. Those forts of mine to build which I expended money like the fall of rain, to acquire which fresh and fiery blood was spilled there, from which I sallied forth roaring like a lion through the ravines, have crumbled down. What desolation is this! Foreigners are dragging out Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth) violently by the hand (the word used here is *kar* which also means taxes) and by persecution. Along with her, plenty has fled and after that health also. The wicked *akabya* (misfortune personified) stalks with famine through the whole country. Relentless death moves about spreading epidemics of diseases.

Below this was published a Sanskrit verse, which said: 'What misfortune has overtaken the land? How have all these kings become quite effeminate like those on the chessboard? How can I bear to see this heart-rending sight?....'

Tilak was arrested (July 27, 1897) and prosecuted for intending 'to excite disaffection towards the British Government among his countrymen and to seek to overthrow the present Government.' The Judge, an Englishman, agreeing with the prosecution, found him 'guilty of attempting to excite feel-

ings of disaffection to the British Government established by law', and sentenced him to 18 months rigorous imprisonment. The sentence was carefully examined in the Press and even a section of the British Press characterised it as 'miscarriage of justice'. Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code under which it was passed was interpreted rather mischievously by the judge. Want of affection was 'disaffection' in his opinion.

The field of Tilak's activities had largely been confined to Maharashtra, but this conviction carried his name and fame far and wide. Never since the harrowing events of the Revolt of 1857 did any news create so much consternation, so much uneasiness and so much ill-feeling against the British as did this conviction. At many places largely-attended public meetings were held serving as a medium for carrying Tilak's message to the people of the provinces which had never come in personal contact with him. He was a truly national hero now. But even some of the Indian papers carried their profession of loyalty to the British to an extreme extent. For example the *Rast Goftar,* a communal weekly, reacted thus on the conviction of Tilak: 'We rejoice to be able to inform our readers that Tilak, the arch sedition-monger, has got his deserts. He is laid by the heels for the next eighteen months.'

Some of the newspapers wrote hotter stuff and some of the utterances at the Shivaji festival meetings were much more 'seditious', but the authorities knew that the removal of Tilak from the scene would bring down the political temperature. It actually did. Sample this English rendering of a verse read out at a Shivaji meeting: 'Merely reciting Shivaji's story like a bard does not win us independence; it is necessary to engage in desperate enterprises like Shivaji and Baji; knowing, you good people should take up the sword and the shield at all events now; we shall risk our lives on the battle-field in a national war; we shall shed upon the earth the life-blood of the enemies who destroy our religion; we shall die, while you will hear the story like women.'[7]

During the whole of one year which Tilak passed in jail, he, and not the Congress nor any other political matter, was

[7] Sir Verney Lovett, *A History of Indian Nationalist Movement,* p 48

the subject of discussion both in India and Britain and several other countries. This discussion indirectly focussed attention on the condition of India, the British methods of suppressing the Press and muzzling free expression, and the seeming subordination of the judiciary to the executive. A petition for his release, signed by Max Muller, Sir William Hunter, Sir Richard Garth, William Cane, Dadabhai Naoroji, Romesh Chandra Dutt and many others, was presented to the Secretary of State for India. Tilak was released six months earlier on the condition that if he happened to be tried again and convicted on a charge of sedition, the unexpired term should be added to his sentence. His home-coming was a hero's return after his victory at the battlefield. There was maddening rejoicing in the country. R. C. Dutt, felicitating him on his release, said in his cablegram from England: 'Your endeavours will never go in vain. They are bound to bear fruit. Your hardships will lead the nation to victory.'

The tremendous awakening created in the country within a short period of five years was wholly due to Tilak. He devoted the next ten years, until he was again arrested and gaoled (in 1908), to trying to convert the moderate Congress into an extremist one. The forces he had brought into being must have an organization to be properly utilized and he thought that the Congress should be such an organization. He had to fight not only the rulers but also his own compatriots, the Moderates.

6

Advent of Terrorism

ALMOST simultaneously with the public celebrations of the Ganapati festival began the terrorist activity confined to a few individuals. May be, as was believed and emphatically asserted in official circles, the terrorist leanings were an offshoot of the intensification of agitational politics. In the history of terrorism in India there is unmistakable evidence of the inspiration of religion—orthodox Hinduism.

At dead of night of June 22-23, 1897, two English officers, W. C. Rand and Lieut. Charles Egerton Ayerst were shot dead by two Maratha young men, both Brahmans and brothers. How the deed was done was described thus by the Bombay Government in a confidential report to the Secretary of State for India: 'A state banquet and reception at Government House, Ganesh Khind, were part of the celebration of Her Majesty's Jubilee at Poona on the evening of June 22nd. Bonfires were also lighted on two hills near to Ganesh Khind, and a display of fire works from a hill just outside the grounds of Government House also formed part of the programme.... Lieut. Ayerst and his wife were returning from the reception at Government House to Poona about midnight, driving in a hired victoria.... About 600 yards from the gate on Poona road, Mr. Ayerst noticed a native seated on the back of the victoria just ahead of theirs, saw a flash, heard a loud report and saw the native jump off the victoria and run off the road into the field to the right. Mrs. Ayerst thought the man had let off a cracker as a practical joke and remarked on it to her husband. The flash and report startled the horse of Mr. Rand's carriage and made at swerve to the right.' (This was no joke. The man seated in the victoria just ahead of Mr. and Mrs. Ayerst

was Mr. Rand. A shot was aimed at him, and he was fatally wounded.) Immediately thereafter, Mrs. Ayerst 'heard a report behind their own carriage. Her husband exclaimed "My God! I am killed" and fell back.' Within minutes Ayerst was dead. Rand succumbed to his wounds on July 3, lying unconscious all the time. The shot at Rand was fired by Damodar Hari Chaphekar and at Ayerst by Balkrishna Hari Chaphekar.

The two brothers had, for a few years, been engaged in some small desperate deeds to give vent to their intense hatred of Europeans, particularly Englishmen. But the provocation for the murder—only Rand was intended to be murdered—came from official excesses in the course of the measures taken that year to check the spread of plague which had visited Poona in a very virulent form. Rand was made the target because he was Plague Commissioner and was supposed to be too harsh and too unfeeling towards Indians. The sense of suffering and frustration was universal. Two Sardars, Balwant Rao Natu and Haripantha Ram Chandra Natu, who sent a detailed account of the excesses to the Congress leader, G. K. Gokhale, then in England, were arrested and gaoled. The following is the summary of the account as published by him in the British Press:

> The inspection of houses by soldiers seems to have been carried out without notice by forcing open, very often unnecessarily when there were other means of entrance, the locks of the shops and houses when the owners were absent, and absolutely no attempt was made to protect properties or houses. No notice was taken of complaints concerning them. A Hindu lady was assaulted by a soldier, and Mr. Natu reported the matter to the authorities producing witnesses. No notice was vouchsafed. The soldiers were refractory, and any complaint against them was ignored. When a man fell ill many neighbouring families were taken to the segregation camp and left there without caring to protect them or their property at home. A man was unnecessarily taken to the hospital and sent back as not being affected by plague to find his furniture

destroyed and his poor wife and relatives forcibly removed and detained in the segregation camp. Temples were defiled by soldiers and his own temple entered by them on account, Natu believes, of his impertinence in making a complaint. An old man who succeeded in satisfying the search party that he was not suffering from plague was detained in jail some hours for having obstructed the search party, the obstruction apparently consisting in the delay caused by him. Insult was the reward for the services of volunteers.

Damodar Chaphekar witnessed the terrible drama as a man of a subject race: 'Oh! what a spectacle it was. Indeed, neither history nor tradition can show such treatment accorded to a subject people by their rulers.... Would (any other) ruler on the face of the globe use his forces in such a fashion? Our English (rulers), however, appear to think that valour consists not in striking down a man in full possession of his power but in capturing those who are stricken with illness and are unable to move an inch.... I prefer to call these operations a loot rather than inspection. While this loot was going on, high officers of Government with Mr. Rand at their head paraded in the streets and supervised the breaking of locks.... Nothing but burning, demolition, wreckage and arrests were to be seen in those parts which this band of raiders visited.'

The Chaphekar brothers made a grim resolution to kill Rand. They spent days and nights in looking for him, but could not find him until the night of the Jubilee celebrations.

Damodar's autobiography, which he wrote in jail, gave a clue to his deeper anger against the British: 'There was plague in the Bombay Presidency, earthquake on the Calcutta side, and a terrible famine all over India. How (un) generous it was (for the Queen of England) to cause the rayats,* already bent with three such formidable calamities, to celebrate the sixtieth year of her reign at such a critical juncture instead of relieving them from those calamities. This behoves only the Queen of England. According to our Shastras, a king and his

*Subjects

subjects are in the same relationship as a father and son. On this principle the Queen is the mother of her subjects. But judging from her actions, there is no reason why, instead of being styled a subject-protecting mother, she should not be called a female fiend who devours her own progeny.' And this is what the Chaphekar brothers did, in sheer helplessness, to give expression to their abhorrence: 'We do not consider ourselves to be her loyal subjects, and with a view to mar the rejoicing we resolved to set up an image of the Queen at some conspicuous and central spot in the Budhawar road on the morning of the Jubilee day. We laboriously searched many rubbish heaps and procured with great difficulty some extremely old and tattered shoes. We could get only six of them. We set up these shoes on the main Budhawar road, with a picture of the Queen stuck to the sole of each of them. Our educated brethren would taunt us by saying that we did this stealthily and not openly. Yes, friends, yes.... Having done this in the morning, we prepared ourselves to go to the Ganesh Khind as soon as it was dusk. At the time of our departure, we relinquished all hopes of our home, wives, children, parents, friends and relatives.'[1]

The two brothers were sentenced to death and hanged—Damodar on April 18, 1898 and Balkrishna on May 12, 1899. Two more murders and two more executions resulted from the Chaphekars' case. One of the former was Ganesh Shankar Dravid, who was sentenced in the early part of 1896 to three years' imprisonment for forging an army officer's signature and to two years further imprisonment for the second forgery by which he released himself from jail. After the Jubilee murders, this convict was contacted by the Superintendent of Police, Bombay, and told that he would be released on parole and given a full remission of his sentence if he could provide a clue to the murderers and help in getting them arrested. The statement he had given at the time of his conviction showed that he had knowledge of different kinds of political activities in Poona. He succeeded in getting Damodar Chaphekar arrested and got not only the remission but a re-

[1] *Source Material for A History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Collected from Bombay Government Records), p. 1010

ward of Rs. 10,000 being half of the amount—he had not yet given any information about the other brother, Balkrishna. Dravid and his brother, who became known as police informers, were one day shot dead by Damodar's third brother, Wasudeo Hari Chaphekar and his friend Mahadeva Vinayak Ranade. Police search was intensified, and all the three—Balkrishna, Wasudeo and Mahadeva Ranade—were arrested and sentenced to death. In a petition they addressed to the authorities they requested that they be hanged on the same day. The petition was rejected and they were executed on three different dates.

All the four 'condemned' men showed rare courage and bravery right up to the time of mounting the gallows. When the death warrant was being read, Chaphekar refused to hear it and began to repeat "Narayan, Narayan, Jai Govind Hari and Narayan, Narayan, Jai Gopal Hari"—God's names used in chorus singing. About ten minutes before the time fixed for execution, a police officer visited him. In reply to the remark whether he knew that he was to die, he said: 'What does it matter about dying? Rand died from a pistol shot, others died from falling off from horses, I am to die by being hanged.'[2]

From the above account one may draw the conclusion that there is little in it to justify its relevance to the freedom movement. Such a conclusion will not be right. As the report of the Government-appointed Sedition Committee (1918) said, these murders were the 'indications of a revolutionary movement first observed in Western India.' They were, in a way, the culmination of the Chaphekar brothers' reaction of remorse to what they regarded as Government policy of generally excluding Brahmans from the army. Damodar had told the trying magistrate in his evidence: 'About two or three years ago I wished to enter into the cavalry and made enquiries from natives in the Risala but was told I could not be employed as I was a Brahman.... I was told before the Risala was divided into companies of different castes that as there were not enough Brahmans there was no company of Brahmans and I could not be employed. I offered to collect

[2] *The Times of India*, April 19, 1898

400 Brahmans and form a company but they would not accept the proposal. I have given copies of the correspondence and the replies sent to me by the police.' The Government was undoubtedly very punctilious in observing certain petty policies in the army and in keeping it divided on a caste basis. It made the most of the differences of religions and castes in India where they promised to yield advantages to the rulers. Damodar says in his autobiography that differences between Brahmans and non-Brahmans in Maharashtra were fostered by Government agents. 'Careful observers', he goes on to say, 'will see that most English people assist' Indian paid agents in creating dissensions among their own countrymen. Many others felt like the Chaphekars, but few resolved to do something.

They collected arms by stealing; they gathered together some men; they started a club with about 150 boys to give training in the use of arms. They were sensitive, and finding dissenting voices, they disbanded the two organizations one after another. The two brothers with a few close associates then took it into their heads that they should assert Indians' self-respect by acts of terror against Europeans. It was perhaps to be an answer to the Europeans' insolence and haughty behaviour towards Indians. They frightened Europeans in the streets. 'Then we began to harass the missionaries. While we were at Bombay we used to annoy in various ways the European missionaries who were to be seen (preaching) at the Back Bay. We pelted them with stones and created an uproar.' They set fire to the bungalow of a missionary; the fire was quickly extinguished. They recited poems (composed by themselves) at public meetings reviling the English. They would say: 'A system of administration so cruel as that of the English cannot, if search be made, be found in any region of this globe.... The English are perfidious and I positively declare that no other people can be found on this earth who are as villainous as they and who like them ruin others by a show, of kindness.' They once satisfied their hatred of the English by smearing Queen Victoria's statue with coal-tar. They collected worn out shoes and tied them in a string round the neck of the statue and called them 'precious gems' for the

Queen. 'When next morning', says Damodar, 'we went to see the statue, we saw many Hindus, Parsis, Muhammedans and Europeans assembled there. All except the Europeans appeared to be delighted.' They regarded English education as a system designed to make Indians loyal citizens of the British Crown and once attempted to burn an examination hall.

In the contemporary history of the Indian people, the Chaphekar brothers were one of those examples in which certain individuals took upon themselves the mighty task of exterminating British rule, and when they could not gather together the requisite strength of men and arms, they behaved desperately, running headlong into the jaws of death. In the following decades there appeared, after the disappearance of the Chaphekars from the scene, a band of revolutionaries, mostly Brahmans, who were inspired by the same motive, the same hatred, and the same religious fervour. The Chaphekars themselves were inspired by another man of the same temperament and attitude who alone created a terror in the late seventies in a part of the Deccan. That man was Vasudev Balwantrao Phadke. His name is reverentially mentioned in Damodar's autobiography.

Phadke, belonging to a poor family, took up a clerk's post in the Audit Office of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway on a salary of Rs. 20 per month. Later he joined the Military Accounts Office on a higher pay. Some incidents in his office aroused his political consciousness and he began to take interest in the activities of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, which had just then been started. He heard Mahadeo Govind Ranade's two lectures on National Trade, which set him thinking. The lectures gave a graphic idea of how India's economic condition was rapidly deteriorating under British rule. He took a vow to use only handwoven cloth thereafter. But he was left wondering how Ranade's belief in divine dispensation about British rule was compatible with the theme of his lectures. Preaching swadeshi* however became a passion with him, and he induced hundreds of youths to take the same vow.

*Country-made goods

The famine, which was then rampant, brought about a revolutionary change in Vasudev, and he entertained thoughts of preparing a revolt. He had no faith in the educated people and turned his attention to the villager. He took leave from his office, and made an intensive tour of the district, especially the area predominantly inhabited by the Ramoshi tribe. The Ramoshis, who once formed part of the Maratha army, had sometime before revolted, in their own way, against the authorities. The Ramoshis had many grievances against the British, and in them Vasudev saw ready material for his plans. He moved among them, talked to them, and advised them that if they wanted their miseries to go they should help him end British rule. They responded to his call. But they were not actuated by any patriotic motive, and deserted him when he ran short of money to pay them. His source of money was political robbery, which he justified arguing that he needed money for the emancipation of the motherland and that since nobody paid him willingly, he had to resort to unsocial acts.

He hoped to initiate his plan in the following manner, to use his own words. 'Having obtained Rs. 5,000 from a Sawkar,* I proposed to send to all sides three or four men a month in advance that small gangs might be raised by them from which great fear would come to the English. The mails would be stopped and the railway and telegraph interrupted so that no information could go from one place to another. Then the jails would be opened and all the long sentenced prisoners would join me because if the English Government remained, they would not get off.' He was inspired by the Revolt of 1857, whose stories he had heard, when yet a boy of 12, from his father.

For quite a few months, Vasudev and his gang were an anxiety to the authorities. When the Bombay Government announced a reward for his arrest, he came out with a counter-announcement offering a reward for the head of the Bombay Governor. But within a few weeks, his movement, largely an individualistic one, collapsed. The authorities were on his track, and he was moving from place to place escaping arrest.

* Money-lender

Eventually, the police got a clue and effected his arrest in a temple where he lay asleep at night. He was charged with the offence of making 'collection of men, arms, ammunition or otherwise preparing to wage war against the Queen' and 'exciting feelings of disaffection to the Government'. His own writings seized by the Government proved the charge, and he was sentenced to transportation for life. During the trial 'cavalrymen and the police guarded the courtroom and its outside which was daily crowded with a vast multitude of spectators'. They included distinguished Europeans and Indians.

Life transportees in those days were usually sent to the Andamans, but 'not sure of the prisoner's behaviour', the Governor of Bombay ordered Phadke to be sent to the fort of Aden. He was confined in a solitary cell. He escaped from the fort, but was again captured and put in heavy fetters. His sojourn in the solitary cell did not last more than two years. 'Symptoms of phthisis', to quote from an official note prepared by the superintendent of the Aden Jail, E. Colson, 'were gradually developing; about the 15th January last, the prisoner was so much worse that his fetters were removed and he gradually sank and died on 17th February 1883.' In vain did he invite, sometime before his death, the attention of the jail authorities to the provision in the jail manual to the effect that seriously sick prisoners should be released. Instead of recommending the provision to be given effect to in the case of Phadke, the superintendent wondered: 'how he became acquainted with this (provision) I do not know.'

Phadke's sacrifice provides some thought-provoking material to study some paradoxes of Indian society at that time. Most men and women adored him and admired him after he had been arrested and convicted. The crowd that assembled in the court compound shouted out 'success to Vasudev.'[3] But when he was desperately making efforts to collect money for his movement, few came forward to help his cause. It can however be safely deduced that while the country lacked men of Vasudev's determination, there were millions who wanted

[3] *Indu Prakash*, dated November 29, 1879

something to be done because they hated the British. Some of the journals also joined in the universal praise and expressed themselves frankly with the usual self-protective phrases thrown in between their comments. Given below are the extracts from some of them.

The *Shivaji* (November 21, 1879): 'The intentions of Vasudev Balvant Phadke were praiseworthy, but he did not go the right way to work for want of a proper education. For the good of his countrymen he gave up a comfortable situation, abandoned a young wife,* and sacrificed his own happiness. He did not commit dacoity in order to amass wealth. We cannot help praising him for his disinterestedness and patriotism, but his plan for effecting the deliverance of his countrymen were not suitable to the present times.'

The *Deccan Star* (November 23, 1879): 'In the eyes of his countrymen, Vasudev Balwant Phadke did not commit any wrong.... Those who censure him for pursuing the course which he did, are simply dissemblers.... Vasudev deserves the highest praise not only from all natives but even from Englishmen who wish for the prosperity of Her Majesty's Eastern Empire. By sacrificing himself he has averted the danger which sooner or later must follow intolerable oppression. We consider him as the harbinger of a bright future for India.'

The *Bodha Sudhakar* (December 3, 1879): 'Vasudev Balwant Phadke must be classed with some of the best benefactors of mankind, but having directed his attention solely to one object, he lost his balance and became demented. His intentions were good, but the means by which he hoped to carry out his ideas were utterly unsuited to the times. We are certain that those who esteem and applaud Washington will do the same in the case of Vasudev; but the natives of India have lost all ideas of patriotism, and hence there is no one among them to appreciate him.'

The vocal and to a much greater extent, silent acclamation that followed the conviction of Phadke and the Chaphekars did not produce any organization to further their plans. In the first three decades of the 20th century an effort was made,

* She had a long life, and died in 1940.

but it failed. It was also frustrated by the efficient system of British intelligence, in which Indians of different ranks, communities and ambitions played a strenuous part. Some of the Indian journals put out material which was quite as daring as the violent deeds of Phadke and the Chaphekars, but their exhortations were avidly read and not acted upon. Britain's rule of law in India was virtually suspended in dealing with terrorists. If Phadke had been tried in a democratic country, he would not have been awarded transportation for life and would not have been thrown into a death-cell in a fort far away from his country. In the situation of a typical autocratic rule of a bygone age, the only violent activity possible was of the nature displayed by the above mentioned men or by hundreds of such others in the future.

Individual acts of bravery also stimulate a spirit of defiance and daring and even men in Government employ are affected by it. After the murder of Rand and Ayerst, several enterprising men, mostly Government servants, thought of the stage as a medium of exposing the oppressive nature of British rule and inciting hatred against it. In 1876 Government had enacted the Dramatic Performances Act to suppress the stage where it was used to denounce the white race and British rule. In the hot temper of the people in the late nineties the Act was again invoked and the projected dramas were stopped. Two of such dramas were 'Shri Shiv Chhatrapati Vijay' (Victory to Shivaji) and 'Lokamat Vijaya' (Victory to popular opinion). The former, written by Anna Martand Joshi, a clerk in the Government Central Press, 'was based on the historical period between the invasion by Shahistekhan and the coronation of Shivaji'. The play was found objectionable, and the writer, who himself was to act in the role of Shivaji, was asked to stop the performance. He submitted to the order. The other, written by Anant Vaman Barve, editor of the *Lokeseva*, 'dramatised some of the incidents which preceded and followed the Jubilee night murders. Excepting a few imaginary characters, the *dramatis personae*, who bore allegorical names, were easily recognizable. The characters whose identity was but thinly veiled were: Bal Gangadhar Tilak representing 'vicharswatantrya' (liberty of thought), the Secre-

tary of State for India representing 'ektantra' (absolute authority), the late Rand representing 'unmad' (madness), and Damodar Hari Chaphekar represening 'raktapata' (bloodshed).

In a Government review, 'Lokamat Vijaya' was described thus: 'The aim of the author seems to be to inculcate the doctrine that sovereign power (*rajasatta*) should be controlled by the voice of the people (*lokamat*) in India and not entrusted to a bureaucrat in England invested with absolute authority. In that case it is insinuated that the loyalty of the people of India would be won by the Crown of England. Mr. Tilak is represented as the master of the vernacular Press and his writings therein as voicing public opinion and breathing a spirit of loyalty and peace. The latter has been destroyed by disturbances in the country and the former snatched away by disaffection. Treason looms large in distance. Under these circumstances, if public opinion is given a controlling power in the Government of the country, peace can be restored and the lost allegiance of the people regained by Divine favour. While glorifying Tilak as the embodiment of liberty of thought, the writer attributes all kinds of unworthy motives to the Secretary of State for India, who is accused of trying to suppress public opinion and to bring its exponent Tilak into trouble.'

An active repercussion of the unrest manifested itself in the form of open violation of forest laws in the district of Thana, in which even the police and village officials participated. 'The forest tribes', to quote from a communication the Commissioner of the Central Division, A. C. Logan, I.C.S., addressed to the Government of Bombay, 'for a while ousted the jurisdiction of the forest department; even the European officers were assaulted and had to withdraw to headquarters. The Koli fishermen, who had absolutely nothing to do with the forest and who owing to their trade in Bombay are an exceptionally prosperous class, rose to the cry of free liquor and free salt, and stormed a Deputy Collector's camp demanding (and getting) orders from him to the liquor shop-keepers to supply liquor gratis. The agris or cultivating class became turbulent and threatening in demands for various concessions, and all the guards of the sub-divisional officers had to be posted to secure their personal safety.'

'In the meantime a plot, no doubt under skilled guidance, was being formed for the advance of three mobs from different directions on the headquarter town and occult symbols flew from village to village. One of these mobs, consisting of several thousand persons, rose before its time and attacked the town of Mahim with the intention of plundering the treasury. Happily the Deputy Collector had the courage to order the police to fire and the assailants dispersed after a few had fallen.... The native Christians who shared the Koli discontent at the price of liquor emulated them in disorder, and (sometimes headed by their priests) burnt down every plague hospital in their parishes as soon as it was erected. Meanwhile Bal Gangadhar Tilak, through the agency of a seditious Sabha at Umbargaon was flooding the country with proclamations against payment of land revenue and urging resistance to any attempt to collect it. And in the midst of all these troubles there was a partial mutiny among the police and one of them deserted with a drill book and after arming and drilling a small number of confederates went off to the Ghats to raise the hill Kolis for an attack on Matheran. Throughout these troubles the village officers were almost invariably active or passive connivers with the disturbers of peace.'[4]

'The British in India', in the words of the Secretary of state, 'were sitting on gunpowder all the time.' Contingents of punitive police were drafted to places regarded as hot-beds of political activity. The Post Offices Act was amended so as to empower postmasters to detain transit postal articles suspected of containing matter of a seditious character. Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, most notoriously used against politicals, was amended so as to make the term 'disaffection' applicable to anything disagreeable to Government. An 'Explanation' to the amendment said that 'the expression "disaffection" includes disloyalty and feelings of enmity'. From the old wording of the section was omitted the 'Explanation' which defined that 'disapprobation of the measures of the Government' was 'not disaffection.' In some parts of the coun-

[4] Bombay Government Records (*A History of the Freedom Movement in India—Source Material*), *Thana Riots*, pp. 637-8

try Secret Press Committees were appointed to serve as Press censors. A representative of the London News Organization, W. A. Chambers, who was present in India in 1898, described the repressive Press measure as a 'distinct disgrace to British India'. At the Congress session of that year he said: 'I am so much astonished at the establishment of Secret Press Committees that no Englishman could approve of this arrangement. It cannot be dreamt even that such things might happen in a country ruled by the British. Still we blame Germany and Russia.'

The last decade of the 19th century was a decade of panic, and the authorities were exercising extraordinary precautions. Discovering that anti-British expressions were finding place even in Turkish papers regularly coming to India, they ordered interception of the postal mail. The papers declared as hostile to Government were the *Malumat* (Arabic Edition), the *Malumat* (Turkish edition), the *Sabah*, and the *Himayat*. Articles in some issues of these papers were regarded 'as tending to create the idea that the seditious party in India will receive support from outside'. Even copies of the prohibited journals addressed to the Turkish Consul in India were intercepted. Whether the Press and the Government in Turkey were moved by an altruistic motive to help the Indian struggle or had some deeper political motive of their own is, at this distance of time, a matter for conjecture. The Secretary of State for India had wired the following summary of the Turkish Press comments to the Viceroy: '*Sabah*, 6th August, referred to mutiny and increased misery of India, diversion of Famine Fund, and violation of women at Poona. *Malumat*, 6th August, referred to the number and power of Mussulmans, signs of their union with Hindus, violation of mosque, and brutal Government. Several other papers adopt the same violent tone. *Malumat*, 25th July, referred to Afghan arsenal, Amir's protection of the rebel tribes, and his issue of gold coin. (There are) reports (of) numerous addresses received by the Sultan from Mussulman community in India including Moulmein; besides considerable contributions to the Turkish Patriotic Fund'. 'The tone of the Turkish Press' was considered as 'generally virulent', containing 'mischievous articles on India'.

The hopes raised by the deeds of the Chaphekars and Phadke and the prompting given by foreigners had to remain in abeyance; and until the revolutionary groups appeared in the latter half of the first decade of the 20th century, the extremists led by Tilak held the field.

7

Towards Extremism

An account of the growth of Tilak's extremist party must necessarily be preceded by an account of the forces the party had to fight to clear its path of obstacles. The first obstacle was the social reform movement aimed at reforming such social practices and traditions as were wrongly supposed to be part of religion and invited ridicule and condemnation from foreign commentators. Hinduism was looked down upon, and in the days of Raja Rammohun Roy (the early decades of the 19th century) the practice of *sati* (burning of Hindu women along with their dead husbands on the pyre) was the most atrocious tradition flung in the teeth of Hindus. The Raja was the foremost among those who demanded, with the force of a campaign, the banning of *sati* by law and strengthened the hands of the Governor-General, William Bentinck, in suppressing it. The Raja repudiated *sati* as part of Hinduism and did not agree with the oft-repeated contention that his religion was inferior to Christianity. He was impelled by the urge to put the true form of Hinduism before the people, and in order to carry out his intention, he established a society which he called the Brahmo Samaj. Born of an orthodox Brahman family, he found himself in the midst of idol worship and other traditional rituals. But when he returned home from Patna after completing his education, he was a rebel against idolatry and all traditional customs which his reason refused to accept. The Brahmo Samaj was to counteract the propaganda of the Christian missionaries who held up Indian religions to lurid light and paraded Christianity as the only deliverer. About three decades after the death of Rammohun Roy, the man who enthusiastically took up his work was

Keshav Chandra Sen. He was largely responsible for the enactment of the Civil Marriage Act in 1872, which permitted non-Christians to go in for a form of civil marriage, provided the parties to the marriage declared that they did not belong to any of these faiths—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Parsi and Judaism. He prepared a Bill for prescribing the minimum marriageable age for girls which was to be fourteen.

These measures made no visible impression on Hinduism as it was practised, and two decades later a new wave of reform appeared. The prevalent practice of child-marriage was a cause of a large number of child widows, and since widow remarriage was forbidden by custom, they were condemned to a life of misery and degradation. Byramji Malabari, a renowned social reformer of that time, took up their cause while he was in England in the late eighties, and with the zeal of a missionary opened a campaign urging the need of legislation to raise the marriageable age of Indian girls from ten to twelve. On his return to India he started a signature-campaign in Poona in favour of his proposal. The proposed legislation had only a modest aim but it roused countrywide opposition, and curiously enough among the opponents were eminent men like Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjea, president of the first Congress, Surendranath Banerjea, known as the father of Indian agitation, Sir Romesh Chandra Mitra, a High Court Judge, Chimanlal Setalvad, another eminent political leader. They contended that society should not and could not be changed by the power of legislation. Tilak had the same argument against the measure, but there was a glaring difference between his approach and theirs. He suggested that girls should not be married until they had attained the age of 16, but the change should be brought about by the people themselves; the Government (foreign rulers) had no business to impose it on them. (He strictly observed the self-imposed restriction in the case of his own daughters.) He carried on a raging and tearing campaign against the Bill after it was made law and utilized the opportunity in stimulating the anti-Government trend in public opinion.

In 1895 the people had a clearer vision of his mind. Luminaries of the time, like M. G. Ranade, had brought into

existence in 1887 an organization which they called the Social Reform Conference and held its annual meetings in the Congress pavilion (it used to be a big structure and was more appropriately called 'Pandal') year after year. By 1895 Tilak's anti-Government agitation had provided him with a considerable status, and at that year's Congress he raised a storm of protest, contending that social reform should not be associated with politics. The number of social reformers and those who listened to them was small, and Tilak suggested that the interest in the Congress would remain confined to this number if the social reform conference remained, to all intents and purposes, part of the Congress.

He elaborated his viewpoint thus in a letter he published in *The Times of India* at the time of the 1895 Congress: 'The Congress eventually aims at being a congress of the people, and the object cannot be achieved unless every year an effort is made to approach more and more the classes that have not taken hitherto much interest in the movement. If the masses are drawn to the Congress, it is possible that they may not lend their support directly or indirectly to the cause of Social Conference. It is this apprehension that makes the friends of the Social Reform restrict the scope of their work for the Congress within a safe narrow circle. One party wishes to draw to the Congress as large a portion of the public as it possibly can irrespective of the question of Social Reform; the other does not wish to go much beyond the circle of friends of reform. The real point at issue is whether the Congress is to be a congress of the people or of a particular section of it.'

Later he wrote in his English weekly, *Mahratta*: 'The Congress will be of the people if hundreds and thousands are allowed to take part in it by being present in or about the gathering and expressing their silent consent to what their trusted leaders have to say.' He addressed public meetings and witnessed the spectacle of support coming to him in big volume. When he threatened to start a People's Congress as a rival organization, a 'guarantee fund' of Rs. 40,000 was raised in a short time. Tilak ultimately won, and the president of the year's Congress sent the following message to be read at the Social Conference: 'The *raison d'etre* for exclud-

ing social questions from our deliberations is that, if we were to take up such questions, it might lead to serious differences, ultimately culminating in a schism, and it is a matter of the first importance to prevent a split.' This put an end for ever to the simultaneous holding of the conference and the Congress in the same pandal.

Tilak's approach was psychological. Orthodoxy was in those days the rule and reform the exception. Most people scoffed at the reformers; the response to their advice was negligible. That Hindu society needed reform could not be denied by any rational being. Tilak knew it, but he thought that he had to deal with society as it was, and not with one to be born in a distant future. At a time when the entire attention was sought to be focussed on political agitation and national awakening against the British, it would be a folly to antagonise the overwhelming majority by linking the political movement with social reform. When the Consent Bill controversy was raging throughout the country, particularly in Maharashtra and Bengal, the public meetings that were being held in different places were the biggest in living memory. One public meeting at Calcutta was attended by a hundred thousand people; it was well nigh impossible to attract such a crowd to a political meeting. How could a mass leader ignore this phenomenon? Instead of rejecting the orthodoxy of thousands of years he would, if he could, use it to further his political aims. If the exclusion of the Reform Conference from the business of the Congress pandal could make the Congress acceptable to the masses, why should it not be done? If Indian society was divided into reformists and non-reformists, the British would be happy at the spectacle of another division and would exploit it. That was Tilak's way of thinking. He said it was an official cry that 'we cannot make any political progress without effecting social reform'; it was designed 'to deceive us'. The approach that had held the field since Raja Rammohun Roy started his Brahmo Samaj was turned upside down. According to that approach, Indian social life should look so modern and civilized as to be regarded suitable for representative institutions. To Tilak, swarajya (independence) was India's birth right and could not depend on any pre-con-

ditions being fulfilled. Indians, whatever their religious practices and whatever their social life, must say with a united voice that the British must go.

At the purely political level an irreconcilable difference divided the Congress leaders, all moderates, and Tilak. To the former humble solicitation was still the only way of asking for political reforms. To Tilak this way was humiliating and ineffective; the people should be mobilised and filled with the fire of patriotism and national pride so that the British might be confronted with an irresistible demand. When Valentine Chirol of *The Times* was collecting material in India for a series of articles for his paper, he was advised that he should begin by studying Tilak's career. 'This', says Chirol, 'was a valuable piece of advice, for, if any one can claim to be truly the father of Indian unrest, it is Bal Gangadhar Tilak.... He was the real founder of the left-wing party in India.' The Moderates were afraid of Tilak dragging the Congress towards the left and jibbed at associating with him unreservedly. The sense of self-preservation was very much in sight. But Tilak, though uncompromising in his resolve to impart speed to the agitation, would not like the differences to grow to a breaking point. He told his rivals: 'We find that owing to the disorders due to the plague and to the angry attitude of the Government, all our movements have come to a standstill. If we mean to revive them, our first duty is to close up our ranks.... Already the Government has restricted our liberty of speech. Let us not keep aloof from each other by creating false doubts and differences.' The Moderates did not respond to the appeal. What Tilak considered as normal political activity was, to the Moderates, something unwontedly disturbing.

He was a disturbing element in the calm atmosphere of the Congress. He had been jailed twice. (In 1882 he and another gentleman had been sentenced to four months' simple imprisonment for publishing certain letters in his paper with a view to upholding the cause of the Maharaja of Kolhapur as against his Minister and the Paramount Power—the British.) He had become well known as holding views that ran counter to basic background of the constitutional agitation. For example,

while Congress leaders, including those whose political activity had begun before the birth of the Congress, were struggling for a larger share for Indians in the country's civil service, Tilak complained as far back as 1881 (*Mahratta* dated October 30) that 'the flowers of our universities have chosen to fetter their freedom of action by accepting Government service, and the ignorant masses, notoriously unused to agitation, are without any intelligent leaders to guide them. Hence it is that Government Acts pass uncontradicted, though the masses groan under them; hence it is that the opinion of the Native Press is passed in contemptuous silence.' It was as far back as that that he said: 'The masses must begin to move or be taught to move by constitutional means; the task must be undertaken by independent educated natives, and not by closet-patriots.' And how could the Moderates mix with Tilak when a section of the Anglo-Indian Press was still associating him with violence? The *Globe* published some remarks suggesting a connection between Tilak and the murderers of the Dravid brothers, the informers in the Chaphekar case.

Against this background Tilak attended the 1899 Congress held at Lucknow with all his characteristic bitterness against the Government, particularly against the Bombay Governor, Lord Sandhurst. And when he rose to move a resolution condemning Sandhurst's rule being responsible for ruining the peasantry, for the reign of terror in the plague-stricken areas, for ruthlessly suppressing those who criticized the administration, the Moderates grew uneasy and one of them objected to the resolution on the ground that an exclusively provincial matter could not be discussed. The president (Romesh Chandra Dutt) agreed, and when Tilak insisted on his right to move a resolution, he threatened to vacate the chair. There the matter ended. Tilak's resolution was unconventional at the Congress and was understood as a gauntlet thrown by the Extremists.

The performance was repeated next year at the Bombay Provincial Conference—a provincial show of the Congress—and here again the chair threatened to walk out, and a compromise resulted in a milder resolution. The resolution Tilak had given notice of was: 'The Conference deeply regrets the

policy of distrust of the people adopted by Government in recent years as evidenced by the institution of Press prosecutions, imprisonment of the Natu brothers, the widening of the power of the police, and the curtailment of the rights of municipal boards, and prays that Government will abandon this policy and replace it by the noble British policy of trusting the people and striving for their welfare.'

This was one side of the picture. The other was of the British relentlessly following their old methods. Cases of 'lynching' of Indians by Europeans were still often reported; sometimes the former also retaliated, but such instances were not many. Here is an official account of 1901: 'On a preliminary analysis we find that there were about 200 cases of assault on natives by European soldiers. These incidents were widely scattered all over the country. Besides the 200 cases, there were also about 50 cases of attacks and assaults on punkah* coolies and other menials (cooks and dhobis**). There were a few cases of indecent assaults on women by European soldiers.' With Indian nationalism asserting its self-respect, the Europeans were realizing that the assaults might not always be endured with equanimity. The same account adds: 'Tea garden managers also assaulted coolies in five cases. But the coolies assaulted European managers in eleven cases. The ordinary civilians also assaulted the military people on many occasions. There are references to 54 cases of assaults on British soldiers by the natives.' In April 1900 a mob in Kanpur, which was in the grip of plague then, attacked a plague camp and killed five policemen as a revenge against official excesses.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that race arrogance was being nursed with vengeance. A case of 1899, in which even a Governor tried to interfere with the course of justice, may serve as an example. On August 19, the police superintendent of Chhapra district (Bihar), named Corbett, kicked the bottom of a constable, Narsingh, and the District Engineer, Simkins, hit him on the head with a rattan. Corbett then struck the man in the face with his fist causing him to fall against

* Fan

** Washermen

a house. Narsingh's fault was that he had declined to do forced labour for the District Engineer. He was admitted in hospital where it was found that his wounds were of a serious nature. Fearing that a complaint might be made, Corbett asked Narsingh to give up service, otherwise he would be proceeded against in court. Narsingh did not obey this order. He was prosecuted, and the trying magistrate, Moulvi Zakir Hussain, under pressure from above, sentenced him to two months' rigorous imprisonment. He preferred an appeal before the District and Sessions Judge, who was an Irish civilian named Pennel. Pennel allowed the appeal, but invited trouble upon himself. In his judgment he observed: 'Assaults by Europeans upon natives are unfortunately not uncommon. They are not likely to cease until the disappearance of real or supposed racial superiority.'

This judgment (passed on October 7) produced a commotion among officials throughout the province. Even the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Woodburn, was exacerbated, and the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, characterised the judgment as an abuse of the 'liberty of inquiry'. Pennel was transferred to Noakhali by telegram. Sometime afterwards the Lt.-Governor visited Noakhali and called Pennel to his private room and told him: 'Seeing your judgment I have grave doubts whether you are fit for judicial employment. The judicial officers are my officers just as much as the executive and I want them to do well. Mind, I am speaking for your benefit and guidance. Reading your judgment leads me to doubt whether you were really so impartial as you should have been. The vindictive rancour with which you pursued the policemen and the district officers makes me think you must have had some quarrel with them.'

Then followed a conversation which is worth reproducing in a contemporary history:

Pennel—'You may think like that, but a judgment like that was worth two National Congresses.'

Woodburn—'As impartial man I pass my opinion.'

Pennel—'I know your Government had done all they could to prevent truth coming out.'

Woodburn—'My Government! Be careful, Pennel, you had

better be careful of what you are saying.'

Pennel—'You consulted the Legal Remembrancer whether witnesses need appear before me.'

Woodburn—'Yes, I had every right to consult the Legal Remembrancer. It was a trumpery case.'

Pennel—'Trumpery case! Should I have any reference about this matter to the High Court?'

Woodburn—'No, Pennel, I am not going to enter into any discussion with the High Court. I am speaking to you privately.'

In another case Pennel had remarked in his judgement: 'In this country the only people who will come forward to give evidence against officers in the case of this kind are those who do not mind their houses being burnt, their shops looted, their relations turned out of Government employment, themselves and members of their families dragged up on false charges and sent to jail.'

In Noakhali Pennel got the police superintendent, named Raily, arrested on a charge of perjury. Raily had attempted to secure liberty for a murderer by giving false evidence. Pennel sentenced the murderer to death. This case made Pennel a hero and on the day (February 15, 1901) he delivered this judgment, 10,000 people followed him up to his bungalow hailing him as Dharmavatar (divinity of justice and uprightness). But on a recommendation from Government, the High Court suspended Pennel and telegraphically ordered the release of Raily on bail. While Pennel was leaving for Calcutta, 15,000 people of all classes silently accompanied him from his residence to the railway station. There were crowds on either side of the road on which his carriage was moving.

There was an upsurge of unrest and nationalism, but the Congress was not making use of it because the leaders were keeping it as an organization of 'closet-patriots'. Even Englishmen like Hyndman were provoking them, but there was no effect. In a letter he wrote to Naoroji, he said: 'I cannot help feeling contempt for the Indians here and in India who, instead of taking up their own cause in a serious way, pass such a silly resolution of congratulation to the Queen as was passed at the Indian National Congress the other day. Con-

gratulations for what? For having ruined India for two or three generations to come? It is pitiful. Men in high positions have said to me, "Where is the evidence of discontent, Mr. Hyndman? Where is the cry for justice from the people of India themselves? If the people are so poor and oppressed, as you say they are, surely we should hear a little more of it than we do hear!" What answer can I give to such challenges? There is no answer.'

At the Congress platform facts and figures of India's poverty were no doubt narrated, but it was such a quiet affair that rulers in Britain accustomed to reacting to mass agitation, were not moved. Even Dutt, the President of the 1899 session, repeated the story with the knowledge of a keen student of economics: The national debt in Great Britain 'has been reduced by about 175 millions since 1860', but in India it 'has gone up by over 100 millions within the period, causing an increasing drain out of the revenues of India for the payment of interest in England.' In 1902 the annual Congress session was held at Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat where one-fourth of the population (less than 10 million) had been wiped out by two terrible famines through which it had just passed. But that year the capital of India celebrated a great Durbar in honour of the coronation of King Edward VII. The President of the Congress, Surendranath Banerjea, made a protest saying, 'the time has passed by when a mere pageant, calculated to dazzle and to astonish, can leave an enduring impression upon the public mind in India.' Next year his successor, Lal Mohan Ghose, spoke in the same strain: 'Do you think that any administration in England or France or the United States would have ventured to waste vast sums of money on an empty pageant, when famine and pestilence were stalking over the land and the Angel of Death was flapping his wings almost within the hearing of light-hearted revellers.... As to the masses of the people, nothing could possibly seem more utterly heartless than the spectacle of a great Government imposing the heaviest taxation upon the poorest population in the world and then lavishly spending the money so obtained over fireworks and pompous pageants while millions of the poor were dying of starvation.'

But to the Viceroy—a Viceroy like Curzon—all these protests were childish chatter; he knew the people were placid, the Congress was a mere chatterbox, and his purblind and repressive measures would evoke no disturbing reaction. What was needed, according to his study of the Indian people and the Indian situation, was a few new measures that might have the effect of diminishing the importance and stature of the clamorous men in the public life. He enacted the Sedition Act and tightened up the law governing the liberty of the people by another piece of legislation, the Official Secrets Act, which relieved the prosecution of the responsibility of proving the guilt of an accused but shifted the onus on the accused himself of proving his innocence. He enacted these laws against the advice of the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council—G. K. Gokhale and Nawab Syed Mohammed—who denounced them as 'an odious, nay, iniquitous measure', of which 'it is impossible to speak with patience or moderation.' The powers of the local self-government institutions in Bengal and Madras were drastically curtailed. The universities were deprived of their autonomous position. By a few other measures he curtailed educational facilities. Under the pretext of 'efficiency', he Europeanized and officialized the university senates. He abolished open competitive tests for recruitment to the provincial civil services in order to substitute favouritism for merit which might not be blindly loyal. He would condemn the entire Indian community as not having the same regard for truth as had Europeans. He openly declared that Indians were unequal to the responsibilities of a high office under British rule.

He had little regard for the Congress and its resolutions. After the Congress of 1904 (held at Bombay) had dispersed, the President, Sir Henry Cotton, who had been 'authorised' by the session to wait on the Viceroy with the resolution demanding reforms for 'a larger voice in the administration and control of the affairs of the country', asked for an interview; but Curzon declined to receive him. The Congress pocketed the insult and decided to send a deputation consisting of Gokhale and Lajpat Rai, the eminent leader of the Punjab, to England to place Indian grievances before the British public. In 1905

the two leaders toured through England, met people and addressed public meetings. The visit was as disappointing as Curzon's repeated insults had been infuriating. Lajpat Rai was deeply hurt. He returned with the conviction that India should depend on its own strength.

It now fell to the extremists to reap the harvest and gather this strength. The Curzon regime had produced political ferment, and the extremists decided to make use of it. A high Government official, Sir Verney Lovett, confirmed that there was growing unrest: 'Discontent slumbered lightly under a surface that was usually smooth.... There was a desire for change, an impatience of the present.' The extremists told their countrymen again and again that the 'policy of mendicancy' followed by the Congress had failed. In a speech at the 1904 Congress, Tilak gave a broad hint in his usually forceful language: 'You know very well that the function of the Congress had been to focus the rays of public opinion annually. We focus the rays of public opinion annually and go away; that has been the charge against us. I say that we focus the rays of public opinion for a purpose, and not merely to bottle them, and that purpose is to direct this focus of rays to illumine the hearts of the bureaucracy that rule in India.... The Indian Empire is a dead body and a foreign body; if that foreign body is not assimilated with the British Empire, we shall have to perform a surgical operation and take out that foreign body from the living empire.'

Tilak and his associates of the extremist school made a resolution to apply themselves to the efforts leading to such an operation. His closest friends in the undertaking were Bipin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh. They had all (excepting Ghosh) come to the Congress in the same year—1889. Ghosh had no faith in the meek way of the Congress. As far back as 1893 he had made a forthright attack on the Congress through the columns of the *Indu Prakash*. (The articles were anonymous; he was then in the service of the Baroda State.) The following extract will indicate the attitude of his mind: 'The National Congress is not really national and has not in any way attempted to become national. The Congress, which represents not the mass of the population but

a single and very limited class, could not honestly be called national. It is not a popular body and has not in any way attempted to become a popular body. The real strength of the Congress lay in the masses, the proletariat, which is the real key to the situation.'

The Congress would yet take many years to become a mass organization; but an event of 1905—division of Bengal into two provinces—created an unprecedented upsurge in the masses. New forces of national awakening were released facilitating the formation of an extremist party.

8

Partition of Bengal and the Boycott Movement

As far back as 1868 it had been realized by Government that Bengal, which included in its administrative jurisdiction Bihar, Orissa and Assam, constituted a very heavy charge for a single administration. Attention was drawn to the 'greatly augmented demands that the outlying portion of Bengal appeared to make on the time and labour of those concerned in the government of the province.' In the discussion that followed 'the question was very thoroughly examined by a number of high authorities,' and in 1874 Assam was separated from Bengal and constituted a separate charge under a Chief Commissioner. In 1892 a new territorial addition was made to the province of Assam—the Lushai Hills.

In 1896-97 there was again a prolonged discussion as to whether the Chittagong division of Bengal should also be transferred to Assam. But the people of Chittagong opposed the proposal, and it was dropped. The districts of Dacca and Mymensingh were, at the same time, also proposed to be annexed to Assam—this meant nearly the whole of that province which was later on styled as East Bengal. Due to the lack of unanimity among the officials concerned, this proposal was also dropped. The Chief Commissioner of Assam apprehended that the change would in effect be rather the annexation of Assam by East Bengal than the transfer of East Bengal to Assam.

The re-distribution scheme affected two other provinces, the Central Provinces and Madras. Chhota Nagpur was proposed to be transferred from Bengal to the Central Provinces, and Sambalpur and certain adjacent feudatory states from the Central Provinces to Bengal. Ganjam district and Ganjam

and Vizagapatnam Agency tracts were proposed to be added to Bengal. By these changes the Government of India intended to bring together under one administration the Uriya-speaking people who constituted a majority of the population of Sambalpur and the feudatory states and Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Agency tracts.

In 1903 the Government of India again suggested to the Government of Bengal the 'desirability of reducing the territorial jurisdiction of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal with the object of lightening the excessive burden imposed upon the Government by the increase of population, the expansion of commercial and industrial enterprise, and the growing complexity of all branches of the administration.' It was further pointed out that the increase in the population from 67 million in 1872 to 78.5 million in 1903 had been 'accompanied by a considerable development of the material resources of the country and a great extension of railways and other means of communication, while the spread of English education and the wider diffusion of the native Press tended to increase litigation to demand more precise methods of administration, to give greater publicity to the conduct of officials, and in every way to place a heavier strain upon the head of the Government and upon all ranks of his subordinates.'

The letter proposed a scheme for the re-distribution of Bengal and examined the arguments for and against the transfer of various territories on the border line to the provinces surrounding Bengal. It asserted that 'the people of Chittagong themselves, who have previously been opposed to the transfer, are understood to have changed their view and to be largely in favour of the change.' The population of Bengal in 1903 was 78,493,410 and the Government of India's proposals would reduce it to 67,500,484 (despite the addition of the four Orissa territories). The population of Assam (in 1903) was 6,126,343 and with Chittagong Division (including the Hill Tippera), Dacca and Mymensingh would have risen to 17,601,989.

The scheme, as put forward in official files, was dictated by sheer administrative convenience. But there was a mischievous political motive (in the partition scheme redrafted in

1902), which was withheld from the files and which the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, himself revealed bit by bit in the course of his speeches made subsequently.

The partition proposals were published for public information, and to the dismay of Government, were condemned all over Bengal. No less than 500 protest meetings were held in East Bengal itself within a period of two months. The scheme was characterised as a device to save certain parts of Bengal, economically and educationally backward, from the effect of the political agitation which was on the increase. The people were told that the Curzon scheme differed from the previous ones inasmuch as it included the whole of North Bengal and also the districts of Faridpur and Barisal in the proposed new province of East Bengal and sought to divide, with a mischievous intention, the Bengali-speaking population into two provinces. The landlords joined the protest for an additional reason: they had their landed property in both Bengals and would not like to deal with two Governments whose policies might differ from each other.

Never before were the sentiments of the people aroused to a higher pitch than at this time. The anti-partition agitation transcended the boundaries of Bengal and was made a national issue. Public leaders in other provinces expressed themselves strongly against 'Government motives', and the audiences at public meetings went home with the impression that a great wrong was going to be perpetrated by the foreign rulers. In the two Bengals the tempo was rising with unprecedented rapidity—there were over 2,000 public meetings, the attendance ranging between 500 and 50,000. What astonished Government even more than this agitation was that the Muslims had joined hands with the Hindus. The Nawab of Dacca, Sir Salimullah, who was later won over by Government by means of favours, denounced the scheme, at an early stage of the agitation, as a 'beastly arrangement'. Even Englishmen —retired Government officials—asked the scheme to be dropped. Sir Henry Cotton, who after his retirement was once president of the Congress, said: 'I am in entire sympathy with the vigorous agitation which has been raised against the proposal.'

But Curzon was a man of determination, and he launched a counter-agitation. In February 1904 he made a tour of East Bengal to feel the pulse of the people and on his way was confronted by swarms of boys in the streets carrying placards with the inscription, 'Do not turn us into Assamese.' He held consultation with local Muslim notables at all stages of the journey, called the Muslims together in large meetings, delivered long addresses at Chittagong, Dacca and Mymensingh, and explained to them that 'his object in partitioning Bengal was not only to relieve the Bengal administration but also to create a Mohammedan province, where Islam would be predominant and its followers in the ascendancy, and that with this view he had decided to include the two remaining districts of the Dacca division in his scheme.' To quote his own words: 'A proposal is put forward which must give to the people of these districts by reason of their numerical strength and their superior culture the preponderating voice in the province so created, which would invest the Mohammedans in East Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussalman Viceroys and kings.... Can it be that the people of these districts are to be advised by their leaders to sacrifice all these great advantages from fear of being tied on the tail of the humble and backward Assam?' Official influence was at work, and during the Viceroy's tour, addresses were prepared and signed by Muslims saying that they did not share the aims of the vehement agitation and would like a new province to be constituted.

Many Muslims were still holding back. A very powerful point that had emerged from the arguments advanced against the partition proposal and which was still sustaining the opposition from Muslims as from Hindus was the curtailment in the political status of the people of the new province: the new province, proposed to be placed under a Chief Commissioner, would not have a legislative council and consequently the people would be deprived of the little advantage of electing the '*additional members*'. Curzon at once announced a concession: 'These objection would disappear entirely if instead of being placed under a Chief Commissioner, the new province were held to be entitled to Lieutenant-Governor, an

appointment which would naturally carry with it the creation of a legislative council.'

Curzon was behaving as a shrewd politician. There had been a glaring indication in the background of Bengal politics that the Muslims would eventually rise to the bait dangled before them by Curzon. In 1876 Surendranath Banerjea had, as already stated, established the Indian Association, which started its career with an agitation for Indians to be appointed to the Civil Service on the same footing as were Europeans. In 1877 the foremost Muslim of Bengal, Ameer Ali, founded an organization for the Muslims exclusively—the National Mohammedan Association. The realization that prompted him to do this, instead of joining the Indian Association, was the same as was time and again given expression to by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan—whether it was an agitation for the expansion of the legislative councils or the entry of Indians into the civil service, only the Hindus stood to gain, and not the Muslims. The civil list was there to give support to this argument. Like Sir Syed's MAO college at Aligarh, the National Mohammedan Association was also engaged in encouraging and supporting Muslims to go in for higher English education. The political organizations in Bengal, though founded by Hindus, were not meant for Hindus exclusively. The Muslims judged them by certain results and not by their avowals. The results were that the competitive tests for the Indian Civil Service led to the appointment of some Indians to high posts, but these were all Hindus. The Hindus or the agitating organizations were not to blame; they were far ahead of the Muslims in English education. The Muslims were not to blame either; if they chose a separate path it was because their boys needed special attention to catch up with the educationally advanced Hindus.

Such a background was ideal for Curzon's arguments to be receptive. The Muslims would have more numerous chances of entering Government service; they would have a legislative council in which they would have a majority of the Indian seats. Compared to these small advantages, British gain would be considerable: the rulers would be able to wean Muslim young men away from agitational politics; and they

would be providing an incentive to separatist tendencies. Curzon's announcement that East Bengal should have a legislative council enabled him to expand its territorial jurisdiction further. He amended his scheme, and East Bengal was now to be a bigger unit. Post-haste he rushed the scheme through the Imperial Legislative Council. A hurriedly convened session was held, and only the official members were able to attend it. The Secretary of State for India approved of the scheme, and in July 1905 it was officially published in India.

In short it provided: A new province of the status of a Lieutenant-Governorship would come into existence. It would consist of Chittagong, Dacca, and the Rajashahi division of Bengal, the state of Hill Tipperah, and the Chief Commissionership of Assam; it would be called Eastern Bengal and Assam. Dacca would be the capital with subsidiary headquarters at Chittagong. It would comprise an area of 196,540 square miles and a population of 31 million of whom 18 million were Mohammedans and 12 million Hindus. It would possess a legislative council and a board of revenue; the jurisdiction of the Calcutta High Court would continue. The five Hindi-speaking 'native states' (till then part of Chhota Nagpur) would be handed over to the Central Provinces.

The Government resolution announcing the changes stated, significantly enough, that 'they would concentrate in a single province the typical Mohammedan population of Bengal for whom Dacca would furnish a natural capital.' But Curzon, who aspired to continue as Viceroy for several more years to implement his unspecified plan, had abruptly to cut short his career as Viceroy. In 1905 Britain got a Liberal government, and John Morley became Secretary of State for India. Even in the former government Curzon was not a popular figure; but Morley would not have him at any cost, and asked him to resign. He was to leave India in November 1905, and in the middle of October he forced his scheme of partition through, appointing Joseph Bampyfylde Fuller, an ardent supporter of the scheme, as Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal.

Now began in Bengal a massive movement, the like of which had not been witnessed in India before. Ordinarily an

administrative arrangement like the one in question would have been allowed to pass with little ado a quarter of a century ago; but now there was enough political consciousness and enough antagonism against the British, which had been accentuated by Curzon's reactionary regime, and a determination was displayed to bring home to the rulers that arbitrary decisions would not be swallowed with equanimity. The assertion, repeatedly made at public meetings and in newspapers, that a self-willed viceroy had imposed his will on millions of people without consulting them had a deep meaning; it was for the people to say what was administratively convenient to them. If they had an administrative set-up in which their voice were a decisive factor, they would have brought down the Government and undone the mischief (as they called it). Public opinion resided outside the precincts of the legislative council and far away from the viceregal palace. It lay scattered over the great length and breadth of the country; the present opportunity was the best opportunity to mobilise it and give it full-throated expression.

Protest meetings, particularly in towns, became a daily affair. There was a mushroom growth of leaders—a result which the Congress could not produce in 20 years: even now the Congress was not the propeller of the movement. All it did was to join in the protest and take note of the new forces. The president of the 1905 Congress, Gokhale, observed: 'The tremendous upheaval of popular feeling which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the partition, will constitute a landmark in the history of our national progress. For the first time since British rule began all sections of the Indian community, without distinction of caste or creed, have been moved by a common impulse and without the stimulus of external pressure to act together in offering resistance to a common wrong.... Bengal's heroic stand against all oppression of a harsh and uncontrolled bureaucracy has astonished and gratified all India, and her sufferings have not been endured in vain when they have helped to draw closer all parts of the country in sympathy and in aspiration.'

That the Congress would not do anything more than lodge a protest in its usual ceremonial manner became clear in an

unpleasant situation at the session itself. At that time the Prince and Princess of Wales were on a visit to India. The Moderates suggested that in keeping with the tradition of the Congress, it should offer them 'most humbly and respectfully its loyal and dutiful welcome.' The extremists, known as Nationalists, would have none of it and opposed the resolution. An uneasy situation bordering on crisis was created. But the old guard devised a solution, being anxious to pass the resolution at any cost: the extremists might walk out of the session when the resolution would be taken up. The Tilak group accepted the solution if only to avoid disturbance at the national gathering. In return for this gesture, the extremists got a better reward; they extracted from the Moderates a promise that the resolution on the boycott of British goods (which had been resorted to by the agitators outside the Congress) would not be hindered; the Moderates were opposed to it but had to agree as part of the bargain. In its main demand—legislative council expansion—the Congress did not reflect the new temper in the country but seemed to be breathing the same air that it did when it was started in 1885. The resolution by which it reiterated the old demand said: 'The time has arrived for a further expansion and reform of the Supreme and Provincial Legislative Councils;' it asked for 'an increase in the number of non-official and elected members and the grant to them of the right of dividing the councils on financial matters coming before them, the head of the Government concerned possessing the power of veto.'

Nevertheless, the very fact that some of the leaders of the Congress, like Surendranath Banerjea who was the leading figure in the partition agitation, had been departing from the wonted moderation of the Congress and that it allowed the passage of the boycott resolution, was enough to create suspicion in the minds of the rulers. The suspicion was voiced by the new Viceroy, Lord Minto, who in his letter of May 28, 1906 to the Secretary of State for India, said: 'As to Congress...we must recognize them and be friends with the best of them; yet I am afraid there is much that is absolutely disloyal in the movement and that there is danger for future.... I have been thinking a good deal lately of a possible counter-

poise to Congress aims. I think we may find a solution in the Council of Princes, or in an elaboration of that idea, a privy council not only of native Rulers but of a few other big men to meet say once a year for a week or a fortnight at Delhi for instance. Subjects for discussion and procedure would have to be very carefully thought out, but we should get different ideas from those of Congress.'[1] Morley (the Secretary of State) seemed to agree with the suggestion and told Minto in his reply to summon an Indian Duma, adding however that he would not like to walk blindfold in the ways of autocracy. But in Morley's letter there was a significant paragraph which could be interpreted as suggesting an alternative: 'Everybody warns us that a new spirit is growing and spreading over India; Lawrence, Chirol, Sidny Low, all sing the same song: "you cannot go on governing in the same spirit; you have got to deal with the Congress party and Congress principles whatever you may think of them. Be sure that before long the Mohammedans will throw in their lot with the Congressmen against you," and so on and so forth.' (The alternative—the Muslim League—is discussed elsewhere in this book.)

The apprehension of the Congress passing into the hands of the extremists was founded on the events that successively followed the formation of East Bengal. The new province was announced to be inaugurated on October 16, 1905. Soon after that announcement the leaders of the anti-partition movement made a public declaration that the day of inauguration would be observed as a day of 'national mourning'. A detailed programme was drawn up for the day: food would not be cooked except for the sick and the invalid; business would be suspended; people would walk barefoot and bathe in the Ganges early in the morning to purify themselves; a vow would be taken to make continuous efforts for the reunion of Bengal. The most sacrosanct and emotional item of the programme was *rakhi-bandhan*—a red band of brotherly union was to be tied round the wrists of the people in the streets and everywhere by each other. 'The bathing ghats were crammed with a surging mass of men and women, all furnished with quanti-

[1] Mary, Countess of Minto, *India, Minto and Morley*, pp. 28-9.

ties of *rakhis,* which they tied round the wrists of friends and acquaintances and even of strangers.' For the whole day the streets and bazaars echoed with the cry of Bande-Mataram (hail the Motherland). A national fund for carrying on the agitation was established, and in a few hours Rs. 10,000 were collected through small subscriptions.

The movement was more intense in East Bengal where the panic-stricken Government issued an order prohibiting the shouting of Bande Mataram in public streets. There was so far no plan to defy the law, because the leaders would not think of asking the people to transcend the border line of constitutional agitation. But to the Government, the spirit unleashed by partition was itself an extraordinary phenomenon, which, if tolerated, would create a situation to which the rulers had not been accustomed. Against the background of these divergent approaches, the next year's provincial political conference met at Barisal (in East Bengal). Barisal was advisedly chosen because the entire propaganda was aimed at promoting the feeling that for the people the partition of Bengal did not exist.

While the delegates were on their way to the house of the conference, they obeyed the order (prohibiting the shouting of Bande Mataram). But the organizers sensed from the demeanour of the authorities that the police might behave vindictively whether there was provocation or not. It was, therefore, 'strictly enjoined that in no circumstances were the delegates to retaliate.' Nothing was to be done by the delegates that might be used by the police as an excuse, and to ensure this, the organizers saw to it that no delegate carried with him even a walking stick. Yet an attack came. As soon as the procession started the policemen waiting on the road alerted themselves. They allowed the conference president, A. Rasul (a Muslim), who was at the head of the procession, and other leaders to pass unmolested but began striking *lathi*-blows at the rear. The Bande Mataram badges the youngmen (in the rear) were wearing were torn off. One of the victims was thrown into a tank for the fault that he shouted Bande Mataram with every lathi-blow struck at him.

Another victim of the authorities' supposed premeditated

plan was Surendranath Banerjea. But he was dealt with differently. He was arrested and taken to the house of the magistrate, an Englishman, who received him with insults. The first insult fell on Kabyavisharad, who had accompanied Banerjea. Belonging to a priest's family, Kabyavisharad was without a shirt; as soon as he crossed the threshold of the magistrate's house, the latter cried out in a loud tone, 'Get out'. Then as Banerjea was about to take his seat, the magistrate again shouted out, 'you are a prisoner; you cannot take your seat. You must stand'. Banerjea protested: 'I have not come here to be insulted by you in your house. I expect to be treated with courtesy and consideration.' This reply was construed as contempt of court and Banerjea was asked to apologise. He declined to do so and was fined Rs. 200. As regards the main offence, he was charged with the 'crime' of being a member of an unlawful procession and uttering 'a cry forbidden by the competent authority'. He asked for time so that he might cross-examine the police superintendent and produce his witnesses, but the magistrate rejected his request and imposed on him another fine of Rs. 200.

The police had apparently hoped that *lathi*-blows and insults would make the delegates think of preserving their 'self-respect' in preference to the propaganda they had undertaken. But it produced a contrary effect. After Banerjea's arrest the conference had gone ahead, as he had himself advised, with its programme, and the delegates while returning shouted Bande Mataram again and again in the streets. The order, which was to be obeyed, was now publicly violated. At the next day's session the police superintendent entered the conference hall and demanded a guarantee that the delegates would not shout Bande Mataram in the streets after the session was over. The President, after consulting the delegates, declined to give the guarantee. The superintendent thereupon read out an order of the magistrate declaring the meeting illegal. The shouting was repeated that day also, but there was no interference from the police.

Official misbehaviour with the Barisal Conference raised the tempo of a more vital part of the movement—application

of economic sanction against Britain. It became a lasting all-India agitation and came to be known as the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement: the use of swadeshi (home-made articles) was to be preached and British manufactures were to be boycotted.

Times without number had it been dinned into the ears of the Indian people by public leaders and by newspapers that the economic exploitation by the rulers in the interest of British trade and industry had been rapidly impoverishing India. The birth of the swadeshi idea can be traced to Gopalrao Deshmukh of Poona, commonly called Lokahitwadi. (His father had fallen on the battlefield fighting for the last Peshwa.) As far back as the forties he had preached swadeshi to save India's village industries. In the early seventies, M. G. Ranade created, by his lectures and writings, an urge for swadeshi, and one of the few men to be deeply influenced by him was Ganesh Vasudev Joshi alias Sarvajanik Kaka (also of Maharashtra). He is known as a pioneer of swadeshi; he spun a certain quota of yarn daily for his own wear and opened swadeshi shops. He succeeded in converting quite a number of people to the swadeshi creed. He was chosen by the Sarvajanik Sabha to represent it at the Delhi Durbar of 1877. Clad in khadi (hand-spun and hand-woven cloth), he became in that imperial show an object of attraction. (It was he who read out at that pageant an address appealing to the Queen to grant to Indians the same political and social status as was enjoyed by the British people.) Another swadeshi enthusiast of those days was Gopal Narsinh Deshpande. He was a stormy figure. He moved through the villages (Poona district), drew up representations on behalf of the people, went from house to house, and said that not a pie should go out of the country. In 1876 a swadeshi promoting society known as the Swadeshi Udhyam Vardhak Mandali was formed by Ambalal Sakarlal, Premabhai Himabhai, Manibhai Jashbhai, Ranchodlal Chhotalal and others at Ahmedabad. Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda also encouraged home industries.

But these efforts were insignificant and so were those made in the nineties. Tilak's *Kesari*, attacking the Government in its issue of August 28, 1894, said: 'We shall now

point out the place which may be very successfully attacked. It is boycotting Manchester and all English goods.' In June 1894 the swadeshi question was discussed at a public meeting under the auspices of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. Gokhale, who called the meeting as secretary of the Sabha, said in his circular letter that the people should protest against the Government policy of excluding foreign textile goods from duty and take a vow not to buy Manchester articles at least until such time as duty was imposed on them.

A year before the new province of East Bengal was thought of, a Marathi journal, *Arunodaya* (August 31, 1902) advocated boycott of foreign goods: 'Let the native of India reflect coolly upon his present condition and the number of evils he is labouring under. On mature consideration he will realize that he is surrounded by too many enemies in the shape of articles of foreign manufacture which he is required to buy for household use. It would be difficult to count the number of these thieves, so to speak, who have entered his house and are plundering his property. It will not do to fight them all at once. His energies will then be dissipated in a desultory struggle with too many foes carried on simultaneously. It is meet, therefore, that he should pursue one thief at a time and expel him from his house. Let him first endeavour, say, to boycott foreign fabrics worn by him at present and attempt to get enough food to eat. For want of salt and nutritive food our countrymen are not as able-bodied as their ancestors. We should concentrate our energies to oust foreign fabrics from the country. It is no use depending for guidance upon our educated brethren in the matter, because they have shown themselves to be too supple and subservient and are seen to accept with alacrity the slavery of Government service.'

Some time later the Indigenous Articles Protection Association was formed at Ahmedabad. One of the papers, *Proja Bandhu* of January 18, 1903, hailing it said: 'The formation of the Association marks a new era, a new development in the history of our country.'

But it was the East Bengal issue which put swadeshi on the platform of political agitation. The forerunner was a

Punjabi Arya Samajist, Tahal Ram Gangaram, who in February 1905, began delivering inflammatory lectures every evening at College Square, Calcutta. He urged his audiences, mainly composed of students, to refuse to buy goods of the rulers' country. The anti-partition agitators adopted Swadeshi as a weapon of expediency, and the public meeting of July 17, 1905, held at the Ripon College under the presidentship of Surendranath Banerjea, formally passed a resolution asking the people to boycott all British and foreign goods until partition was undone. Then there was a spate of meetings in different parts of Bengal, all deciding to organize boycott of English goods and encourage swadeshi. How to do it? The answer was, picketing; and it was resorted to vigorously. When, with the fall in the sale of foreign goods and increase in that of country-made articles, particularly cloth, on which attention was largely concentrated, the prices of the latter rose, the picketing volunteers would enable the poor to go in for it by subsidising the purchase. The enthusiasm ran high; contents of the ships arriving with foreign goods were thrown out. Salt monopolies which had tortured the Indian mind for more than a century were avenged; bags of Liverpool salt were pulled out of boats and thrown into the river.

At the instance of Aurobindo Ghose, religion was invoked to step up the boycott movement. Two religious leaders issued injunctions against the use of foreign goods and sent out missionaries to preach the use of swadeshi. The plan succeeded marvellously. The priests refused to perform religious ceremonies with foreign articles. On the occasion of a religious festival (August 28, 1905), fifty thousand people took a vow before the goddess Kali not to buy foreign articles and not to employ foreigners for jobs for which suitable Indians were available. The Durga Puja season, which every year used to be an occasion for large sales of foreign goods, passed off with foreign merchandise stores wearing a deserted look. Foreign sugar, cloth, rice, bowls, boots, soaps, hats, glass bangles, cigarettes, salt, all lay unsold in the godowns.

Those found wearing foreign clothes, including Europeans, were jeered at and insulted. 'At an examination of the Ripon College, the college authorities supplied foreign-manufactured

paper upon which the answers were to be written. The students in a body refused to touch the blank books that were supplied. So strong was the feeling that it was thought not safe to ignore it. Country-made paper had to be substituted, and the examination then proceeded in the usual way.' A grand-daughter of Banerjea, aged five, returned a pair of shoes sent to her by a relative because they were of foreign make. Another interesting example is of a girl-patient, six years old, who, in her delirium, cried out that she would not take any foreign medicine. Of the marriage presents that included foreign goods, of any kind that could be manufactured in the country, were returned. Guests would refuse to participate in festivities in which foreign salt or foreign sugar was used. So vehement was the public opinion that nobody would think of buying foreign cloth; those who went in for it for its cheapness would buy only at night.

In the case of students, the Government's reaction was imprudent and added new stimulus to the movement. The district magistrates sent out a circular letter to all heads of educational institutions warning them that if they would not prevent their pupils from participating in the activities connected with the boycotting, picketing and other 'abuses associated with the so-called swadeshi movement', the schools and colleges concerned would forfeit their grants-in-aid and the privilege of competing for scholarships and the universities would be asked to disaffiliate them. (The circular was not sent to the schools and colleges of Calcutta, apparently for the reason that there it might provoke more trouble than in the districts.) Rightly did the *Statesman* observe, in its comment on the circular, that 'Government has blundered apparently into a childish and futile policy which can only have the effect of manufacturing an army of martyrs.' No amount of exhortation from leaders would have created the effect which this circular did. An anti-Circular Society was formed to organize defiance to it and a Society for the Promotion of National Education in Bengal (Banga Jatiya Vidya Parishad) was formed for 'imparting education on national lines under national control and directed towards the realization of the national destiny.' It started 24 National High Schools in East Bengal alone.

Similar was the result of the shabby treatment meted out to the Barisal conference (discussed above). At a meeting held in the courtyard of a Hindu temple, ten thousand people took a vow: 'Invoking God Almighty to be our Witness, we take this solemn vow that, so far as practicable, we shall use home-made articles and abstain from the use of foreign articles. So help us God.' Banerjea has described the effect of the police break-up of the Barisal Conference thus: 'Men indifferent to public movements took the Swadeshi vow and practised it in their daily lives. Recluses buried amid their books emerged from their seclusion and eagerly joined the Swadeshi and anti-partition demonstrations.

There is reason to accept the inference drawn at that time by many leaders that in East Bengal Lord Curzon, and not the new Viceroy, Lord Minto, still exercised considerable influence, Lieutenant-Governor Fuller being his man. The repressive policy pursued by Fuller indicated the attitude of Curzon rather than that of Minto. Minto felt uncomfortable and complained to the Secretary of State for India that Curzon was 'carrying on a campaign at home with the intention of influencing decisions with which he had been directly connected in India and as to which he would naturally be suspected of being in communication with his supporters here.' Minto also spoke of 'the bitter native feeling' Curzon had 'aroused against him by the partition of Bengal and his speeches in connection with it.'[2] In a private talk with Surendranath Banerjea, Minto had frankly spoken out his mind: 'If my country was divided in the way your province has been, I should feel just as you do.' The order imposing the restraint on students was issued while Curzon was still Viceroy; but Minto, while not withdrawing it, did not like it to be used as a repressive measure. Fuller however stuck to the original policy and ordered expulsion of 300 students who had been charged with boycott activities from their institutions. He also asked Calcutta University to withdraw recognition from two schools which had ignored the restraint. 'The Viceroy (Minto), judging that such drastic action would, at that moment, be certain only further to in-

[2] Mary Minto, op. cit., p. 49.

flame Indian passions, made insistent recommendations to him (Fuller) to exercise discretion pending the introduction of new regulations. Unable to acquiesce and hoping by strategy to gain his own ends, Fuller tendered his resignation to the Government of India. To his surprise, the Viceroy accepted it.'[3] Minto who was convinced that Fuller's administration was a 'serious danger' felt relieved.

Like Ripon, Minto came on a mission of peace, but unlike him he had the most disturbed period that any Viceroy had had since the Revolt of 1857. In the words of Sir Pertab Singh, Maharaja of Idar, Curzon had strewn Minto's bed 'with thorns and he must lie on them'. He would not recommend the undoing of partition, for that would mean surrendering to Indian agitation. When a deputation of the Indian Association met him, he told them that East Bengal was a 'settled fact'. He became an unwilling instrument of policies and deeds that put ever greater amount of blood into the veins of the agitation. What kind of blood-transfusion was it? 'Swadeshi workers or preachers', to quote Banerjea, 'were often prosecuted or persecuted; public meetings were prohibited; military police were stationed in quiet centres of the population and they committed assaults upon peaceful citizens.... Responsible people were falsely charged with sedition for issuing swadeshi circulars.' The most dangerous of the results was the birth of of a terrorist party. (This is dealt with in a separate chapter.) The kind of reaction Government repression was bound to produce may be typified by one example. One day two young men solicited a closed-door interview with Banerjea and whispered into his ears: 'We have come to ask your advice upon a matter of utmost importance. We have formed a plan to shoot Sir Bampyfylde Fuller; and we are going tonight for this purpose. What do you say about it?' The immediate cause of provocation, they said, was: 'His Gurkhas stationed at Banaripara have been outraging some of our women, and we want to take revenge upon him. We will take our chance and if need be suffer for the honour of our women.' Banerjea advised them to abandon the plan, and they obeyed him.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 52.

From Bengal the Swadeshi and boycott movement travelled to other parts of the country. In Maharashtra the atmosphere was most receptive. Tilak was naturally the first to draw attention towards it through a leading article in the *Kesari* (August 1905): 'It appears that many of our people have not yet grasped the full significance of the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal. Such drastic measures are absolutely necessary especially when there is a struggle going on between a people and their alien rulers. The history of England itself contains a noteworthy instance of how an angry people proceeded to chastise their King for having refused their demands. The British people are of course at liberty to rule over us; we have neither the power nor the inclination to take up arms against them. But should we not try to stop the drain of millions of rupees from the country? Do we not see how the Chinese boycott of American goods has opened the eyes of the United States Government? History abundantly proves that a subject people, however helpless, can by means of unity, courage and determination overcome their haughty rulers without resort to arms. We therefore feel confident that people in other parts of India will not fail to lend a helping hand to the Bengalis in the present crisis.' In Bengal the Chinese example was of course the inspiration behind the movement, and the *Statesman* had administered a timely warning to the Government. The paper had stated editorially: 'Those who were responsible for the Boycott Resolution have doubtless been fired by the example of the Chinese and they are optimistic enough to assume that a boycott of European goods could be made as effective and as damaging as the Chinese boycott of American goods has to all appearances been. . . . It would be unwise for the Government to assume that the whole movement is mere froth and insincerity. On the contrary it has been apparent for some time past that the people of the province are learning other and more powerful methods of protest. The Government will recognise the new note of practicality which the present situation has brought into political agitation.'

Tilak gave the lead, and the entire Maharashtra Press took up the cause of Swadeshi and boycott. At many places protest

meetings were held; the partition was deplored and the people were exhorted to take to swadeshi of which boycott was a component part. New organizations came into being and special committees of the existing organizations were formed in order to keep the agitation going. Societies like the Swadeshi Vastu Sabha took pledges from people that they would, as far as possible, only use hand-made goods. The Maratha Theatrical Conference asked the Marathi theatrical companies to purchase only India-made articles.

In September Tilak gave a clearer lead. In the two articles the *Kesari* published on the subject, the following points were made out: 'Our people should take a lead from our Government who are gradually carrying out a policy of excluding Brahmans from service.... In a similar manner we should show preference above all others to native and next to it to Japanese manufactures, and where we cannot get these, we should patronise German and other European goods not made in England. It is no use disguising the political character of the present boycott movement.'

Even the Ganapati festival was now used to give impetus to the swadeshi movement; and it became a greater eyesore to the authorities. A new rule was promulgated by Government providing that no Ganapati image should be taken for immersion without a pass from the Police Commissioner unless it was taken by a single person over his head through the streets.

Tilak made a whirlwind tour not only of the Bombay Presidency but also of other parts of the country. The city of Bombay, despite being a centre of leaders, had yet no trace of the boycott movement. He was invited to preside over the first public meeting. He told the meeting a bitter truth: The swadeshi movement was not the outcome of partition of Bengal but of the unsuccessful agitation of the National Congress and similar other causes. He expressed his astonishment that while Congress leaders eagerly went about from house to house begging the people to decorate and illuminate their houses on the occasion of a royal visit, they could not find time to enquire into the causes of poverty of their countrymen. As time passed, his speeches were becoming more critical of

the foreign rule: 'If we do not wish to be white men's slaves, we should vigorously carry on the swadeshi movement. It is the only effective method for our deliverance. The object of the movement is to do away with the system under which we are treated like slaves by Europeans and to force Government to give us all the rights of British citizenship. Some men of moderate views among us say that we should not carry on the swadeshi movement in such a way as to draw down upon us the wrath of the official class. But we must not listen to such counsels as they are likely to hamper the progress of the movement.'

The tempo of the boycott of foreign goods was now rapidly rising. Even Muslims were now flocking to Tilak's banner despite strenuous efforts to hold them back. He was asked to deliver lectures in Muslim durgahs (mausoleums) and big crowds gathered to do him honour. So impassioned was his eloquence and so responsive was his audience that one felt as if British rule was going to be shaken. At one place (Dhulia) a meeting of Muslims exclusively was held under the presidentship of a Muslim divine, Mulla Sheikh Chand. It adopted swadeshi resolutions amidst cries of Bande Mataram and Allah-o-Akbar. In Poona, which had been a centre of Hindu orthodoxy, Muslims came forward to join hands with Hindus. One Kazi Saifuddin of Hyderabad, addressing a mixed gathering of Hindus and Muslims, said the time had arrived when the two communities should jointly act in furtherance of the interests of India and in carrying on the swadeshi agitation for the industrial regeneration of the country. Tilak was at the zenith of his popularity. Several papers published ballads in his praise, comparing him with Shivaji; some styled him as Shivaji of the present age. His birthday was celebrated on the date of Shivaji's birthday; in the city of Poona there were illuminations, religious and political discourses, *mela* songs, processions. Day after day, the nationalist Press of the Bombay Presidency poured out comments and special articles on India's economic condition and the British policy on account of which it was deteriorating fast.

Tilak imported the swadeshi movement from Bengal, and the Bengalis, in turn, imported the Shivaji festival from Poona.

Ever since Tilak came in contact with Bengalis, they had made Shivaji one of their heroes, but in 1906 they invited him and his close colleagues to their Shivaji celebrations at Calcutta. Never had a non-Bengali been accorded such a grand public reception as was given to Tilak. The Poona leaders were 'lionized throughout their stay. They were paraded through streets amidst fervent enthusiasm; their carriages were unhorsed and hauled by an enthusiastic crowd, while they themselves were greeted with thrilling and rapturous shouts of Bande Mataram.' Here also Muslims attended his meetings. A few of them made speeches vindicating Tilak's claim that Shivaji was as much a hero of the Muslims as of the Hindus. One of these speakers was Moulvi Liaqat Husain Khan. Historian Moulvi Abdul Karim was invoked to bring home to Muslims that Shivaji was entitled to the respect of Mussalmans because he abstained from desecrating mosques or showing dishonour to the Koran in the territories conquered by him. These references were significant at that time because the Anglo-Indian and English journals were reviving the old argument that Shivaji having treacherously assassinated Afzal Khan, the Muslims should hold aloof from the Shivaji festival.

Now followed the practical effect of the exhortations in the territories under the immediate influence of Tilak—the Bombay Presidency, Central Provinces, and a few princely states. The account should appropriately begin with students' activities, for they were the first to defy the authorities in their passion for Swadeshi. The students of the Rajaram High School in Kolhapur, who had assembled (September 1905) for the Preliminary Matriculation Examination, were given the usual foolscap paper to answer the questions. The paper was of British manufacture. They tore it up and clamoured for country-made sheets. The Principal, an Englishman, remonstrated with the boys, but he was insulted. He became adamant and said that unless the boys 'testified their penitence by submitting to corporal punishment,' he would not permit them to take part in the examination. The punishment was to be awarded at any rate, and 50 boys were given caning on the hand. According to an official report 'the outbreak was clearly pre-concerted, and none of the masters, of whom all

were peaceful, gave the slightest assistance to the Principal or Vice-Principal in maintaining order. The *emeute* commenced by a boy holding up a piece of paper and drawing the attention of the others to the fact that there was a crown on it; he then tore it up as did all the others.' Even the corporal punishment did not satisfy the Principal wholly, and, according to the official account, 'he told the rebellious students, who wanted to appear for the Matriculation Examination, that they rendered it impossible for him to grant them the certificate of good moral character without which they were unable to appear.' One of the teachers of the school, known for his enthusiasm for swadeshi, was dismissed for allegedly instigating the students. The Kolhapur spirit was displayed in a number of educational institutions in other towns with different results. For example, in Amraoti some students were rusticated under the orders of the Director of Public Instruction. In Poona, where the situation was in the hands of Indian teachers, the students' demand for swadeshi paper was met, and there was no trouble.

Here is another example to illustrate student activities. 'At 4 p.m. (October 7, 1905) the students of the New Preparatory School (otherwise called Maharashtra Vidyalaya) held a private meeting in their school to discuss the steps to be adopted for the burning of the European-made clothes. After collecting all the clothes and other articles, such as umbrellas, velvet caps, lead pencils, buttons, etc., from those who were willing to destroy them, all the students, headed by Shivram Mahadev Paranjpe, marched down to Tilak's Wada and thence joined the procession. Paranjpe said (at the meeting) they did not intend to be rowdy or disorderly but to be disciplined and constitutional as a constitutional agitation was sure to be crowned with success. The crowd then proceeded to a spot where European clothes, etc., had been heaped, and the speaker told them to set fire to it.' This was done. Why the foreign articles should be burnt was explained by Tilak who was present at the meeting: 'Although it had been proposed to give the European clothes to the poor instead of destroying them by fire, still it was not right to do so from the point of patriotism and religion, as what is bad for one is bad for all.'

Here too Shivaji was the presiding deity; the meeting dispersed with cries of Shivaji-ki-jai.

An example of the part of the larger section of the public may also be given: (It is from the official 'report on native papers for the week ending October 14, 1905.')

> This year's celebration of the Vijayadashmi festival at Poona was attended with unprecedented enthusiasm. A handbill was distributed in the morning announcing that a bonfire of English goods would be made during the festival, and the people of Poona rejoiced at the prospect of being able in some measure to emulate their ancestors, who were accustomed to inaugurate great undertakings on the occasion. A large concourse of people having assembled in the courtyard in front of the Maharashtra Vidyalaya at the appointed hour, a procession was formed. The procession was accompanied by a cart carrying the English goods destined to be offered as a sacrifice, and many passersby added their quota to the head as the procession wended its way. Some native drummers sat in the cart, and the sound of their drums seemed to ring the following appeal into the ears of the processionists: "O descendants of Shivaji, kick out English goods from your homes and take them to the place of sacrifice." By the time the procession reached the Chatorshingi maidan, the sun had set, going as it were, to inform Shivaji in heaven of the wonderful spectacle he had seen. A funeral pyre of English goods was prepared and drenched with kerosene oil and a torch was applied to the heap. When it burst into flames, the eyes of the spectators sparkled with patriotism.... Mr. Tilak called upon the people to walk three times round the bonfire, apply the ashes to their temples and take an oath never to purchase English cloth even at the risk of having to go naked. Three cheers having been given for Shivaji at the conclusion of this speech, the aforesaid oath was taken by those assembled, and the meeting dispersed.... Mr. Tilak, in the course of his speech, accepted the fatherhood of the movement.... Nearly 2,000 students and 3,000 adults took part in the procession.

The zeal for Swadeshi manifested itself in different ways. There were swadeshi exhibitions, swadeshi dramas, fund collections for encouraging and subsidizing swadeshi articles, swadeshi factories, swadeshi sweets (those made of foreign sugar being banned), religious discourses enjoining the use of swadeshi. Even in idle talks swadeshi was discussed. At small social gatherings poets sang of swadeshi; writers read out essays and wrote articles in the Press. The indigenous industries were asked to keep their profits within limits; that, they were told, should be their contribution to the movement. Ladies would assemble, sometimes in temples, to take a vow that 'the purchase of glass bangles and similar articles of European manufacture should be discontinued'. Temples were again used as venues of meetings called to administer the oath that foreign sugar would be boycotted. Some of the leaders distributed medals to young men whose contribution to the movement was meritorious. Effigies of 'native traitors' dressed in European clothes were burnt. Industrial classes were started to give training so that there might be no lack of technical workers for swadeshi factories.

A few extracts from the contemporary official reports may be quoted: 'The Gokak Sub-Inspector reports that on 6th January 1908 the District Magistrate (Mr. Brendon) distributed prizes to the Marathi school boys in the Anglo-Vernacular School, Gokak. Afterwards Mr. Brendon gave the boys some sweets and left in the evening. Next day the boys had a procession through the streets and some of the sweets were stuck together to form a garland and stuck on a pole and paraded through the town with cries of Bande Mataram, Shivaji Maharaj-ki-jai, and Burn foreign things. The rest of the sweets were thrown at the garlands and left on the ground untouched. The sweets were made of foreign sugar.' The following is an abstract from a C.I.D. report of March 31, 1909: 'N. B. Deshpande, manager of the Bande Mataram Camp Factory, Budhwar Peth, Poona, is distributing handbills in Poona, stating that as the Mohammedans in Poona have decided to follow the lead of their brethren in the Punjab and use swadeshi caps, the factory has been making caps at their request.' Was there a swadeshi mint? In a note dated August

7, 1909, the District Magistrate wrote: 'An extraordinary story has reached me to the effect that there exists at Bellary or somewhere in the district of that name a swadeshi mint which issues swadeshi coins. These coins, it is said, pass current among the local devotees of Swaraj and their use has spread as far as Calcutta.'

British cloth being the main target of attack, the movement caused serious dislocation in the export trade of Manchester and Lancashire textile goods. The number of orders from India was very small even on the occasions of big festivals. The people were being repeatedly told that if they completely boycotted foreign manufactures, they would be 'stopping an annual drain of 40 crores of rupees', and they would be frustrating the Government design of helping Manchester and Lancashire at the cost of India. And the people were responding in no small measure. On April 16, 1907 the *Kesari* reported: 'There is a complete lull in the transactions of Manchester goods in Bombay.' Another weekly, *Kal*, of October 2, 1908 said: 'The crisis in Lancashire has thrown a hundred thousand people on the streets and many of them have taken to rioting.... The foreign trade of England greatly decreased during the last year. The Swadeshi movement in India, the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland and German and American competition are all having their effect on British commerce.' The movement was hailed and compared to the days of petitioning: 'All our efforts by means of petitions and deputations to draw the attention of Englishmen to the wretched condition of Indians were fruitless.... Boycott is the magic ointment to be applied to the eyes of the bureaucrats.' Cotton mills had been coming up in India, largely in the Presidency of Bombay, for quite a few decades, but during the boycott movement the pace was considerably accelerated. Nothing could be a more desirable stimulant than the determination of the people to go in for inferior and dearer country-made things in preference to superior and cheaper foreign manufactures—English cloth was often sold at cheaper prices because of duty concessions.

The movement spread to other provinces though it was not so intense there as in Maharashtra and Bengal. It moved to action many patriotic people. Bonfires of foreign clothes

became a lasting feature of India's struggle for freedom.

The post-partition events gave rise to a potential question. What for were the British staying in India? The obvious answer was to exploit India economically; and if the boycott movement could deprive them of a sizable amount of money, would it not mean winning part of the battle? The other beneficiary (than British industry) was the bureaucracy which made fat amounts of money as salaries and allowances at the cost of India. To it also the boycott was sought to be extended. The beacon of this part of the movement was Bepin Chandra Pal, who since 1903 had, through his weekly *New India,* been preaching the cult of Nationalism, National Education and the New Spirit. In a series of lectures Pal delivered at Madras he gave a new programme of advanced political thought in India. He was a man of great intellectual force and high character. He had travelled a great deal in Europe and America. His Madras lectures went into several editions and were greatly responsible for consolidating a bloc of extremists. The following extract is a sample of the New Spirit which Pal was anxious to foster:

> You may get a High Court judgeship here, a membership of the Legislative Council there, possibly an Executive membership of the Council. Or do you want an expansion of the legislative councils? Do you want that a few Indians shall sit as your representatives in the House of Commons? Do you want a larger number of Indians in the Civil Service? Let us see whether 50, 100, 200, or 300 civilians will make the Government our own.... The whole Civil Service might be Indian, but the Civil Servants have to carry out orders—they cannot direct, they cannot dictate policy. One swallow does not *make the summer.* One civilian, 100 or 1,000 civilians in the service of the British Government will not make that government Indian. There are traditions, there are laws, there are policies to which every civilian, be he black or brown or white, must submit, and as long as these traditions have not been altered, as long as these principles have not been amended, as long as that policy has not been radically

changed, the supplanting of Europeans by Indian agency will not make for self-government in this country.

Then he dwelt on the boycott of Government offices:

They say: Can you boycott all Government offices? Who ever said we would? Who ever said that there would not be found a single Indian to serve the Government or the European community here? But what we can do is this: We can make the Government impossible without entirely making it difficult for them to find people to serve them. The administration may be made impossible in a variety of ways. It is not actually that every deputy magistrate should resign: I won't serve in it. It is not that when one man resigns nobody will be found to take his place. But if you create this spirit in the country, the Government servants will gradually imbibe this spirit. That does not put an end to the administration, but creates endless complications in the work of administration, and if these complications are created in every part of the country, the administration will have been brought to a deadlock and made none the less impossible, for the primary thing is the prestige of the Government and the boycott strikes at the root of that prestige.... We can reduce every Indian in Government service to the position of a man who has fallen from the dignity of Indian citizenship.... No man shall receive social honours because he is a Hakim or a Munsif or a Huzur sheristadar.... No law can compel one to give a chair to a man who comes to his house. He may give it to an ordinary shopkeeper; he may refuse it to the Deputy Magistrate or the Subordinate Judge. He may give his daughter in marriage to a poor beggar, he may refuse her to the son of a Deputy Magistrate, because it is absolutely within his rights, absolutely within legal bounds.... Passive resistance is recognized as legitimate in England. It is legitimate in theory even in India, and if it is made illegal by new legislation, these laws will infringe on the primary rights of personal freedom and will tread on dangerous ground. Therefore it seems to me that by means of the

boycott we shall be able to do the negative work that will have to be done for the attainment of Swaraj.... Let our programme include the setting up of machinery for popular administration and running parallel to, but independent of, the existing administration of the Government.

Pal's lectures kindled a fire of political agitation in Madras, and were followed by disturbances. On June 27, 1907, the Viceroy proposed to the Secretary of State the deportation of the Bengali agitator, saying that 'Pal's behaviour has been monstrous, and it is the danger of it that we cannot ignore'. The Viceroy argued that a policy of prosecutions had been decided upon, but it was doubtful whether it would be possible to get a jury to convict him under section 124-A. He therefore suggested that 'in such exceptionally pronounced cases as that of Bepin Chandra Pal...deportation' was 'more simple and effective than prosecution, attracting less prolonged attention and at the same time immediately impressing the public minds.'[5]

The Viceroy added in his letter: 'What we all feel is that we must have some safeguard against the contamination of the Indian Army. Commanding Officers report that inflammatory leaflets are freely distributed amongst the rank and file and with a view to getting some further clue to their origin I lately sanctioned the interception of suspicious correspondence. Much matter of an inflammatory and seditious nature has come to light. The Intelligence Department tell me there are proofs too of treasonable correspondence with Russia and with Russian Staff Officers.'[6]

Already, about 20 months earlier, reports about the responsiveness to the call of swadeshi in the Indian Army and civil Government offices had begun circulating. A newspaper comment (*Gujarati*, November 5, 1905) may be reproduced as an example of the reports: 'The swadeshi movement is gathering greater strength every day. It is not therefore surprising that the swadeshi spirit should have permeated the ranks of the army. It was recently reported in the newspapers that the

[5] Mary Minto, op. cit., pp. 147-8
[6] *Ibid*, p. 148

soldiers of some regiments in Bengal requested the Military authorities to allow them to wear native-made cloth. This report has been officially contradicted from Simla, but we know how to take such contradictions at their true worth. We for one have not the least doubt as to the correctness of the original report. The native army is no doubt under the control of Government, but it is swadeshi at heart. Government servants too of all ranks, whether employed in Police, Railway, Post or Telegraph Departments, are actuated by the same spirit.'

Pal's revolutionary call was of course not responded to in the manner and to the extent he had expected. There was, however, a great deal of invisible response. Government servants, while remaining faithful to their duty, were gradually shifting their respect from their employers to national leaders like Tilak, Pal, Lajpatrai. They discussed in condemnatory language, even inside their offices, the foreign Government's exploitation of their country; and these discussions promoted ever greater amount of hatred towards the British. The people, who had submitted to British rule as a settled fact which could not be altered, now avidly read and discussed the leaders' speeches. There was no law banning swadeshi goods, and they took the fullest advantage of the anomalous situation in which the rulers disliked swadeshi being preached and adopted but could not stop its use. Pal wanted to propagate the New Spirit, and herein he succeeded tremendously. It was no small achievement that even the traditionally submissive Government servants now looked down upon their English officers and paid reverence to Indian leaders. According to Lady Minto, Banerjea was acclaimed 'King of Bengal' by Bengalis on 'an occasion when they paraded the streets carrying him at the head of a procession sitting under a gold umbrella. The procession was headed by figures made of pith and clay showing Kali dancing on the body of an Englishman interpreted as India victorious over Great Britain.'[7] In Maharashtra Tilak was proclaimed as the second Shivaji. People openly said: 'The British king is not our king.' Only a few decades ago loyalty to the British Crown used to be loyally expressed.

[7] *Ibid*, p. 121

9

A Congress which was Smashed

THE CONGRESS was the only national organization in the country, and it was natural for the extremists to think of it as the vanguard of the movement of their conception. How to undermine the influence of the moderates and how to capture the Congress was the question before them. Pal made the beginning by mooting a proposal that Tilak should be made president of the 1906 Congress, which was to meet at Calcutta. The moderates grew nervous and thought of a clever device to frustrate Pal's proposal: If an elderly leader was chosen, Tilak would certainly give in. They cabled to the Grand Old Man (Dadabhai Naoroji), who was in England then, asking him to return to preside over the year's Congress. He agreed, and the moderates won the first battle, although the subjects committee (whose function was to prepare resolutions for the Congress session) witnessed 'the most uproarious and almost rebellious' scenes. It was difficult to keep order, and the moderates were able to speak by sheer persistence. Naoroji was not unaware of the new trends in India. He said in his presidential address that the Calcutta Congress was 'the first Congress after its having come of age', and that Swaraj should be the goal of the Congress. For the first time a Congress president used this word which was interpreted as meaning complete independence. (The interpretation was not reflected in the Congress resolutions in the years to come.) Understandably, the presidential address was deprecated by some Anglo-Indian papers. The *Englishman's* comment was that the president was called upon to quench the flame of hatred towards British rule, but he used kerosene for the purpose.

The president's address was the first sign of encouragement

to the extremists' aspiration of making the Congress the vehicle of a mass movement. The second sign came from the unchallenged acceptance of their controversial resolutions on swadeshi, national education and boycott. In vain did the moderates seek to provide in the resolution that the boycott should be restricted to Bengal. The context of the boycott was no more the grievance of Bengal over partition; it was now a weapon against the British as such. How was the 'national education' different from the education imparted in schools run under the control of Government's education department? Tilak had elaborately answered the question at public meetings. He said the children at school or college were not told anything about India's economic condition. How this condition had deteriorated under British rule should form part of the national education. The text books conspicuously missed lessons on patriotism. In the United States of America, he would say, the Proclamation of Independence was taught in V or VI Standards; in this way they trained their children in politics. Such a training was sedition in India and punishable with imprisonment. 'We must start our own schools. We must do our work selflessly.' He wanted the work to be taken up by the Congress. He deplored English as the medium of instruction: 'We spend 20 or 25 years for the education which we can easily obtain in seven or eight years if we get it through the medium of our vernaculars.' He asked Hindi to be made the national language of India. He would, in short, reverse the direction of the wind—since the days of Raja Rammohun Roy, English and English education had been continuously encouraged by Indians themselves.

The moderates were stubbornly sticking to the old direction. As Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya has observed, they 'were not the enemies of Government'. It 'is amply proved, not only by their own unequivocal avowals made every now and then, but from the marks of favour and preferment for which these sturdy patriots were singled out by Government from time to time. The judiciary was naturally the field selected for such preferment.' Some of the Congress presidents and other Congress leaders were offered posts on the Bench. Some others were appointed members of the Viceroy's or the Governor's

Executive Council. The Congress platform seemed to be a jumping ground to high posts under Government. Some of the leaders were retired Government officers and drawing pension. They were dubbed as petitioners; the extremists asserted that petitioning would no more be employed as a way of dealing with the British. Could the moderates not be even as bold as progressive Englishmen were? the extremists asked. Arthur Balfour had about that time summed up the result of the Government of India's industrial policy thus: 'One by one each of her nascent industries was either strangled at its birth or handed over gagged and bound to the jealous custody of the rival interests in England until at last every fountain of wealth was hermetically sealed so that the whole nation was thrown on the land.'[1]

Between the moderates and the extremists, the choice for Government was obvious. Viceroy Minto realized that if the moderates were to be kept on the side of the ruling party, they would have to be appeased and prevented from joining or sympathising with the extremists. This could be done by throwing a few more high offices to Indians and giving them another instalment of reforms without, of course, any substance of power. He suggested to the Secretary of State that a few Indians should be appointed on the (latter's) India Council and the Viceroy's Executive Council. He also drew up new proposals for reforms. Morley agreed, suggesting however that what was really wanted 'a million times beyond political reforms' was the access of Indians to the 'higher administrative posts of all sorts'. And about four months later (January 1907) the two agreed on the admission of a 'Native Member' to the Viceroy's Executive Council. This little concession was to Morley, as he wrote to the Viceroy, 'the first step in a dangerous journey'. In the Viceroy's council (consisting wholly of European members), the step was vehemently opposed. Minto's sensible answer was: 'In my opinion, without knowledge of what is going on around us, we cannot stay as we are.'

Minto found himself sandwiched between the European community's opposition and the perilous unrest prevailing in

[1] Quoted in Hirendranath Mukerjee, *India Struggles for Freedom*, p. 29.

the country. The state of his mind can be discovered from the following words in his letter dated May 8, 1907 to Morley: 'One cannot tell what effect present conditions may have on the Anglo-Indian mind in respect of any recognition of Indian claims. I think it is quite possible that if we could have brought in our reforms by the beginning of the year the present upheaval might have been prevented, or at any rate we might have been in a better position to control it.'

But the rulers, while recognizing the ferment in the political situation in India, were in no mood to part with an iota of power. In his covering memorandum, submitting the reform proposals to the Secretary of State, the Viceroy plainly said: 'The Government of India must remain autocratic; the sovereignty must be vested in British hands and cannot be delegated to any kind of representative assembly.' He shuddered to think of power being exercised by Indians; it would mean loss of British safety and British interests. He had written to the Secretary of State while recommending the inclusion of an Indian in his Executive Council (March 19, 1907): 'I do not believe that any despatch fraught with greater difficulties and greater possibilities has ever left India. It deals with a future which no one can foretell.' For about 150 years (since the occupation of Bengal), the English had not allowed any Indian near the seat of power; and now an Indian was going to be a member of the Executive Council! Was it not going to be a beginning of Indianization of the executive authority and subsequently of the entire Government? If yes, that would be the end of British rule in India.

In 1907 the people were in the grip of a psychological fit of reminiscence. Fifty years before, they recalled partly with sorrow and partly with hope, the people waged their first war for independence and lost it. There was no violence of that magnitude visible anywhere, but the Viceroy seemed terror-stricken. In the summer (1907)—in May the Revolt of 1857 was started—he wrote a pathetic letter to the Secretary of State: 'We all feel that we are mere sojourners in the land, only camping and on the march.' And Morley replied: 'Your way of putting this helps me to realize how intensely artificial and unnatural is our mighty Raj, and it sets one wondering whether

it can possibly last. It surely cannot, and our only business is to do what we can to make the next transition, whatever it may turn out to be, something of an improvement.' He curiously asked: 'Will your Reform policy, Natives on my Council, Decentralisation, Economizing of Taxation, and the rest of our virtuous deeds really make a pin of difference in their feelings about British Rule?' A few months later two Indians were appointed to the Secretary of State's Council. The one on the Viceroy's executive Council was however not appointed until 1908.

Indian leaders being completely unaware of the correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, these two and other authorities put up a show of full confidence in their ability and British power to cope with any situation. What had terrified them was the atmosphere of sedition all around created by extremist leaders and the possible outbreak of terrorism of which there were definite indications. No Indian had so far injured the smallest component of the British administrative machinery in India; but the events of the past two years, which had shaken many people's faith in British rule and created an urge for self-government, were enough to unnerve the rulers. It was natural to apprehend that any wave of violence emerging from the prevalent hatred might make white men and women a target of mob fury. The British did not run away from danger. They remained; but they realized that they could not continue on the old basis and that it was no small headache to continue. The question before them was how to continue as long as they could. But was the situation in India really so alarming as it appeared to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State? The extremist activities looked like the manifestations of violence in the seventies; in both cases the effectiveness was not so tremendous as was apprehended, and the rulers were able to regain confidence, at any rate, for a spell of years, by suppressing the extremists with the authority of governmental power.

This takes us to the Congress of 1907 held at Surat; it was the most memorable and tumultuous session in the history of that organization. What transpired between the rulers and the moderates in their mutual contacts is not known, but the

moderates came determined to drop the boycott resolution which had been passed at the 1906 session and was, according to the established practice, to be repeated in 1907. On the other hand the extremists were preparing for a showdown and even to contest the presidentship—it was an unusual thing because presidents in the past were chosen by common consent, and the moderates being undisputed leaders, their nominees were never opposed. Nagpur had been fixed to be the venue of the session, but when the moderates discovered that Tilak had been proposed for the presidentship against their nominee, Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, and that, Nagpur being a stronghold of the extremists, they were faced with a serious challenge, they shifted the venue to Surat.

On December 26, the session began with a welcome speech of the chairman of the reception committee, Tribhuvan Das Malvi. The following news portion of his speech is worth quoting here: 'Since the Congress met last year we have passed through very troublous times. Eminent Indians have been seriously suspected and charged with the highest offences against the State—exciting sedition, rioting and the like—in most cases without justification. Somehow the idea became prevalent among the ruling classes that the present year, being the 50th year since the Indian Mutiny, Indians were preparing for a similar revolt, and a sort of panic seized them. To check this imaginary revolt all sorts of repressive and reactionary measures were taken. Old obsolete enactments, of the existence whereof no one ever dreamed, were brought into requisition for the purpose of punishing people for undefined offences assumed to have been committed, without giving any notice to the victims of the charges laid at their door, or giving them an opportunity of meeting those charges. The people in certain localities were assumed to harbour treasonable intentions, and meetings were prohibited in those districts. We have now a very dangerous statute in the shape of Seditious Meetings Act capable of general application throughout the country by a notification in the Government Gazette thrust upon us.'

After the chairman had finished, there was a hushed silence for a moment. Then Dewan Bahadur Ambalal S. Desai formally proposed the name of Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh. A section

of the delegates voiced their disapproval by the cries of 'No, No'; there was no interruption beyond this, and Desai was able to finish his speech. But a tumult broke out when Surendranath Banerjea rose to second the proposal. There was repeated shouting and it became impossible to hear Banerjea. The chairman adjourned the meeting till the next day hoping that the passions would cool down. The extremists, who had mainly been provoked by the moderates' proposal to drop the boycott resolution, held a conference of their followers; the attendance was about 500. They decided to prevent the attempted retrogression of the Congress by all constitutional means, even by opposing the election of the president, if necessary. They were prepared to drop their intention to contest the presidentship if their demands about the boycott resolution and such other resolutions were accepted. Tilak had already declared: 'We have not come to cause a split in the Congress; we do not want to hold a separate Congress; we want to see that the Congress does not go back. We solemnly say that we want the Congress moving with the times. But the people who brought the Congress to Surat, although Nagpur was willing to have it, are going to drag the Congress back. They have no moral courage. They are against the word "boycott" though they are for swadeshi. When you profess to accept swadeshi, you must boycott Videshi (foreign) goods; without boycott swadeshi cannot flourish. The fight is between two principles: (1) earnestly doing what is right, and (2) doing it but not displeasing the Government. I belong to the party which is prepared to do what it thinks right whether the Government is pleased or displeased. We are against the policy of mendicancy. Many young gentlemen in Bengal have gladly suffered for this attitude. No one has any authority to make the Congress recede from its ideal. We do not come here to embarass the Moderates; but we are determined not to allow the Congress to retrograde.... The Congress is an organization of all people and the voice of the people ought to predominate. The policy of the Moderates is destructive. We want to progress.' Nevertheless he earnestly wanted to avoid trouble. In order to free himself from the embarassment and to lead the extremists with

full vigour, he refused to stand for the presidentship retaining the right which his followers used by proposing Lajpat Rai for the contest.

On December 27, when the Congress reassembled and Surendranath Banerjea was called upon to resume his speech seconding the resolution, Tilak sent a note to the chairman of the Reception Committee who was in the chair, saying: 'I wish to address the delegates on the proposal of the election of the president after it is seconded. I wish to move an adjournment with a constructive proposal. Please announce me.' The chairman ignored the note, and after the seconders had finished their speeches and after a reminder had similarly been ignored, Tilak rushed to the platform elbowing the volunteer who tried to stop him. In the meantime the chairman hurriedly put the motion to vote. From one side there were cries of 'all, all' and from the other, there were shouts of 'no, no'. The chairman declared the motion carried. Dr. Ghosh occupied the chair, and Tilak stood on the platform telling him, 'you have not been duly elected'.

A wild uproar had already commenced. In the state of confusion, a shoe came flying from the delegates benches and hit Pherozeshah Mehta, Bombay's eminent moderate leader for a long time. As if this were a signal for disturbances to start, chairs were seen being lifted to be thrown at Tilak by persons at the foot of the platform, and some of the extremists rushed to the platform to his rescue. The Congress dispersed in confusion. Next day the extremists tried to arrive at some kind of rapprochement, but the moderates were in no mood to sit with the extremists in any assembly.

Tilak still extended his hand of friendship. He said (on December 28): 'I and my party are prepared to waive our opposition to the election of Dr. Ghosh as president and are prepared to act in the spirit of forgive and forget provided firstly the last year's resolutions on Swaraj, swadeshi, boycott and national education are adhered to and each earnestly affirmed, and secondly such passages, if any, in Dr. Ghosh's speech as may be offensive to the Nationalist Party are omitted.' There was no response. (The extremists had been given to understand that the presidential address contained refer-

ences derogatory to them and their programme.)

The moderates were apparently afraid of Government coming down upon them, upon the Congress itself, in the event of the resolutions being passed. One of their top leaders, Gokhale, had given expression to this fear: 'You do not realize the enormous reserves of power behind the Government. If the Congress were to do anything such as you suggest the Government would have no difficulty in throttling it in five minutes.' That Gokhale's approach to politics was still decades old had been made clear by his speech in the Legislative Council on the budget debate: 'The question of the conciliation of the educated classes...raises issues which will tax all the resources of British statesmanship. There is but one way in which conciliation can be secured, and that is by associating these classes more and more with the Government of their own country.... What the country needs at the moment above everything else is a government national in spirit even though it may be foreign in personnel.' The extremists' programme being wholly different from Gokhale's limited aspiration, how could they pull on together?

But in the prevalent temper of the country, the moderates could not openly harp on the tune. After the Congress broke down in confusion, the leading moderates—Dr. Ghosh, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale, D. E. Wacha, Madan Mohan Malaviya and V. Krishnaswami Iyer—consulted together and drew up a 'notice,' calling a National Convention on December 28. The agenda contained the following resolution: (1) The attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and participation by her in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members was the goal of India's political aspirations. (2) The advance towards this goal was to be by strictly constitutional means. Out of the 1,600 delegates, present, 900 attended the convention; the extremists were excluded. The convention adopted the resolution and appointed a committee of more than hundred persons to draw up a constitution for the Congress, the object being to incorporate in it the above aim. In April next year the committee, meeting at Allahabad, prepared the draft of a new

constitution, providing that the aim of the Congress was the attainment 'of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire'. It was not adopted by the Congress until 1911.

After the Surat fiasco the extremists applied themselves to the task of preparing the country to adopt their programme. The moderate Press indulged in wild abuses, particularly against Tilak. Here is an example of their writings: 'Tilak had been feeding the flames which have burnt the Congress to ashes. He is not a patriot but a traitor to the country, and has blackened himself. May God save us from such patriots.' But Tilak did not change his conciliatory attitude: 'Whatever our differences may be about the ideals, we, Moderates and Extremists, should unite in carrying on the work of the National Congress.'

There was no response again. The next Congress was yet a year away, and the tempo of extremism would have to be kept up. Another movement was conceived and started; it remained confined to Poona and a few other places in the neighbourhood. For about half a century, the Press had been decrying the excise policy of the Government, who had been encouraging ever larger numbers of people to take to drinking. When the Congress also joined in the protests, the Government of India in 1890 sent out instructions to the provincial Government saying that before starting liquor shops, 'efforts should be made to ascertain the existence of local public sentiment and that a reasonable amount of deference should be paid to such opinion when ascertained'. Several Governments took some steps in compliance with the instructions. But the effect was short-lived. No Government was prepared to lose the revenues it made from the excise. In the Presidency of Bombay the Press complained that the instructions were treated with indifference. The Indian Temperance Association had been carrying on its propaganda, but the result was disappointing. In 1908 the Bombay Temperance Association decided, on the advice of Tilak, upon a peaceful picketing campaign in Poona. From Poona the picketing spread to other places. The volunteers posted at the shops were asked to do peaceful picketing, 'praying' to the visitors to save themselves and their families

from ruin. The movement was no doubt directed against a government which, as a matter of policy, was to be openly condemned by all possible means, but the Association had no intention to break the law, and believed that picketing was a lawful weapon.

The Government was in a quandary. The auction of liquor shops presupposed sale of liquor; if the sale was disturbed with the Government looking on picketing unconcernedly, how could the contractor collect money to discharge his obligation to Government? The police therefore intervened and proclaimed an order calling upon the volunteers to withdraw and stop picketing. The volunteers did not obey, contending that the order was illegal. They were arrested for disobedience of the order and sentenced to different amounts of fine. The authorities' reaction differed from place to place. At one place the volunteers were forcibly removed from the shop. At another an order under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code was issued requiring people not to 'congregate and loiter in the vicinity of the country liquor shops with the purpose of preventing customers from entering the shops.'

Tilak was moving from place to place and addressing largely-attended public meetings and telling the people that drinking was prohibited both by Hinduism and Islam; it was only Christianity, the religion of the rulers, which permitted it; the English had demoralised the Indians, and took away from India ten crores of rupees annually and in return taught them to drink.

At one of the meetings it was decided that a deputation should meet the Governor to know his reaction to the magistracy's high-handedness, and in order to create a congenial atmosphere the movement should be suspended. Tilak was to be one of the deputation, which was to meet the Governor on July 6, 1908. But the Governor who had, to use the words of the then Home Member of the Bombay Government, Sir John Mackenzie, been 'awaiting a good case against Tilak to take action', ordered his arrest 12 days earlier and took him into custody on June 24. No other step could have restored the Congress to the Moderates.

10

Sedition, Bomb, and Reforms of 1909

In the spread of extremism the Press appeared to be the forerunner as it had been in the 19th century. Newspapers, pamphlets, and handbills were distributed in large numbers inciting the people to revolt. The beginning, which was made in 1904, was rather innocuous, but after the partition many papers and pamphleteers took the risk and broke all restraint. Here is a sample of a circular distributed through the agency of the bar libraries in East Bengal: 'The English are lying cheats, who are ruining our life in the world, ruining our industries, and importing their own manufactures, plunder our fields and throw us into the jaws of fever, famine, and plague. It is our blood they are sucking. Shall we bear it any more?'

As the 50th year of the Revolt was drawing near, a number of newspapers took to writing in furious terms. A few instances will give an idea of the new trend. The editor of *Vihari,* taking a poem by Wilfrid Blunt as his text, said that India had fallen into slavery and that the ultimate means of acquiring independence was by the sword which must eventually be unsheathed. The High Court of Bombay sentenced him to two years' imprisonment. He had previously described the empire of the Feringhee (the English) as 'Hell on Earth', and the English as 'surpassing Nero, Nadir Shah, Tamerlane, and even Satan in cruelty'. Three successive editors of the *Vihari* were prosecuted and jailed in 1906, 1907 and 1908.[1] The *Deccan Herald* printed a manifesto calling on all honest Bengalis to rise and throw the Feringhees into the sea, killing 50,000 of them.[2]

[1] J. D. Rees. *The Real India*, pp. 191-2
[2] *Ibid*, p. 192

The *Yugantar* of Calcutta suggested: 'Revolution is the only salvation for an enslaved society. With a firm resolve you can bring English rule to an end in a single day. Dedicate your lives as an offering at the temple of Liberty. Without bloodshed the conquest of the Goddess (the Mother of Bande Mataram) will not be accomplished. Let the heads of their intruders be given offering, let 70,000,000 hands take up the sword; beggars and fakirs have distributed pamphlets among the native army in Rawalpindi; the cup of the English is full.'[3]

Not only Rawalpindi but a number of places in the Punjab were seriously affected by the spirit to do something in the fiftieth year of the Revolt. An idea of what was done in the first two months of 1907 can be had from the Viceroy's despatch dated March 5, to the Secretary of State for India: 'The influence of the seditious machinery is undoubtedly spreading and, I am afraid, has captured the Punjab to considerable extent. I heard today of the discovery at Mardan, the headquarters of the Guides, of a circular addressed to Native troops pointing out to them how easy it would be to throw off British rule. This is the first authentic information that has reached me of an attempt to corrupt the Native Army. The circular emanated from some natives of India now in the United States.'

In April the excitement reached such a high pitch that the authorities began to entertain fears of a repetition of the Revolt of 1857. Numerous meetings were held in towns, the storm centres being Lahore, Amritsar, Rawalpindi, Ferozepore and Multan. Speakers sprang up from among lawyers, teachers and other educated classes; they openly and fearlessly gave vent to their feelings and, in consequence suffered imprisonment. The Viceroy's next despatch summed up the situation thus:

> Three days ago we received a weighty and urgent minute from Ibbotson* on the present political situation in the Punjab.... He describes a state of things giving rise to

[3] *Ibid*, p. 195

* Governor of the Punjab

the greatest apprehensions. Everywhere the extremists openly and continuously preach sedition, both in the Press and at largely attended public meetings convened by them.... The campaign of sedition assumed two main forms. In the towns of Lahore, Amritsar, Pindi, Ferozepore, Multan and other places..... has openly advocated the murder of high officials, and he and others have urged the people to rise, attack the English and be free. In the country systematic efforts are being made to corrupt the yeomanry from whom the army is recruited. Special attention is given to Sikhs and military pensioners; seditious leaflets are circulated to Sikh villages, and at a public meeting at Ferozepore, where disaffection was openly preached, the men of the Sikh regiments stationed there were invited to attend and several hundreds were present. The Sikhs are told that they saved India for us in the Mutiny, that we are now ill-treating them, and that this is a judgment on them for betraying their country in her war of independence.... It is alleged that we wish to crush the flourishing indigenous industries of cotton and sugarcane; it is said that we have taken people's money and given them paper in return, and the villagers are asked, who will cash our currency notes when we are gone. The people are urged to combine to withhold payment of Government revenue, water rates, and other dues; to refuse supplies, carriages and other help to Government officers on tour, and native soldiers and police are pilloried as "traitors" and adjured to quit the service of the Government.

The Viceroy added that this propaganda was organized and directed by a secret committee of the Arya Samaj, a society, which was originally religious but had, in the Punjab, 'a strong political tendency'. He was convinced that the 'head and centre' of the movement was Lajpat Rai and 'his most prominent agent in disseminating sedition is Ajit Singh, formerly a school master, employed last year by the supposed Russian spy, Lesseff.' On May 9, 1907 Lajpat Rai was arrested and a few days later Ajit Singh also. Both were deported to Mandalay; though lodged

in the same house, they were not allowed to contact each other. They were released after six months. Ajit Singh escaped to Iran.

The year 1907 passed without any serious disturbance, but the tempo of the so-called seditious writing went on increasing. In 1908 Government enacted two new laws, the Explosive Substances Act and the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act. The latter empowered the authorities to confiscate the printing press of any paper that contained 'any incitement to murder or any offence under the Explosive Substances Act or any act of violence'. The magistrates were empowered to order confiscation of printing presses even before the accused were produced before them for hearing and also to order attachment before legal formalities were gone through.

Persecutions and prosecutions followed these enactments. A few cases may be cited here. In U. P. the editor (Shanti Narayan) of a newly started paper, *Swarajya*, was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In Bengal the two most famous journals, the *Bande Mataram* and the *Yugantar* were stopped. In the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh), the editor of *Hari Kishore* was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment. The press was declared forfeited to Government. In U. P. again the editor of *Urdu-i-Moalla* was sentenced to seven years' transportation for sending to the *Bande Mataram* a telegram which was considered seditious and for circulating a 'seditious leaflet'. In Bombay the editors of the *Hind Swarajya*, the *Vihari*, and the *Arunodaya* were sentenced to various terms.

Two cases of 1907 are of particular interest. Aurobindo Ghose, a member of the editorial staff of the *Bande Mataram*, and the printer of that journal were charged with sedition. Bepin Chandra Pal was called by the prosecution to appear as witness. He refused the summons saying that the prosecution was detrimental to the interests of the country; and he was sentenced to six months. The other case was of the editors of the *Sandhya* and the *Yugantar*, edited by Brahmobandhab Upadhyaya and Bhupendra Nath Dutt, respectively. The former declined to take part in the proceedings saying in his

written statement: 'I do not want to take part in the trial because I do not believe that, in carrying out my humble share of the God-appointed mission of Swaraj, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and must necessarily be in the way of our true national development.' His case ended with his death in hospital. Dutt was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment.

The 'agitation', to quote Rees, 'has been spread throughout India by means of the vernacular journals with a success which an electioneering agency in England might well envy.'[4] To the rulers this agitation was the worst kind of sedition.

The 'sedition' was more uncontrolled at the numerous public meetings. Government was determined not only to check violence but also to stem the rising feeling of patriotism and nationalism. It came out on May 11, 1907 with an ordinance making it obligatory on the organizers of a public meeting to give the district magistrate concerned seven days' notice. The magistrate was empowered to prohibit any meeting at his will. Those not prohibited were held under police surveillance. After six months the ordinance was given the legislature's sanction and named the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act.

The result was the same as it would have been without the new laws. The meetings did not stop, and often the organizers did not care to seek the magistrate's permission. In fact the law made its own contribution to the atmosphere of excitement. Many meetings were broken up by the police; the organizers and audiences were beaten up; arrests were made indiscriminately. So heart-rending was the repression that even the Secretary of State felt compelled to write to the Viceroy (Morley's letter dated July 14, 1908): 'I must confess to you that I am watching with the deepest concern and dismay the thundering sentences that are now being passed for sedition, etc. I read today that stone-throwers in Bombay are getting twelve months. This is really outrageous. The sentences on the two Tinnevelly-Tuticorin men are wholly indefensible—one gets transportation for life, the other for ten

[4] *Ibid*, p. 171

years.... They cannot stand. I cannot, on any term whatever, consent to defend such monstrous things. I do therefore urgently solicit your attention to these wrongs and follies. We must keep order, but excess of severity is not the path to order. On the contrary it is the path to the bomb.'[5]

The bomb had already appeared two and a half months earlier and killed two European ladies. To give a chronological account of the events leading to the appearance of the bomb we must go back to the year 1905. One Shyamji Krishna Varma, who had quietly gone to London and lived for some time in obscurity, started there the India Home Rule Society with himself as its president, and located its office in a building which he named the India House. He issued a penny weekly, the *Indian Sociologist,* as the organ of the Society. Varma (born October 4, 1857) belonged to a poor family. During his school days he went on a lecturing tour on behalf of the Arya Samaj as one of the principal lieutenants of Swami Dayanand. A European professor sent him to London in 1879. After graduating from the Cambridge University he was called to the Bar. In 1881 the Secretary of State for India selected him to represent India at the Berlin Congress of Orientalists. On his return to India he served in the Indian states of Ratlam, Udaipur and Junagadh as Diwan or a member of the Council. In Junagadh a European officer, whom Varma had obliged, got him sacked. Varma was greatly influenced by Tilak's politics, and left permanently for London for political work.

In India House were enrolled by Varma some revolutionary recruits, the principal among them being Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, aged 22. In 1899, while only 16, Savarkar had formed a Patriots' Group of three members only. In a year the Group developed into a full-fledged organization and was named Mitra Mela (Friends' Union). In 1901 the Mela met to consider whether they should condole the death of Queen Victoria and declare allegiance to King Edward or not. There were whispers, and Savarkar rose to give a line of clear thinking: 'England's Queen or King is the Queen or King of our enemies. To declare allegiance to such a Queen or King is not allegi-

[5] Dhananjay Keer, *Savarkar and His Times,* p. 10

ance. It will be the Bible of Slavery.' According to his biographer, the first bonfire of foreign cloth in India was organized by Savarkar in 1905. In 1904 the Mitra Mela grew into a revolutionary party, and its name was changed to Abhinav Bharat—Savarkar was still at college. About this time news came to India that Shyamji Krishna Varma had offered scholarships to Indian students desiring to study in Europe. Savarkar applied for one and got it. He left for London in June 1906.

In London Savarkar started the Free India Society. It worked openly and recruited members for the Abhinav Bharat. Among those who joined it were Madame Cama, Senapati Bapat, Madan Lal Dhingra, Ravi Shankar Shukla, Sikandar Hayat Khan, Bhai Permanand, Har Dayal, Hemchandra Das, and Gyan Chand Verma. Madame Cama, once secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji, was the first Indian to hoist the Indian national flag at the Socialist Conference in Germany in 1907: 'This flag is of Indian independence. Behold, it is born! It is already sanctified by the blood of martyred Indian youths! I call upon all gentlemen to rise and salute this flag of Indian independence. In the name of this flag I appeal to lovers of freedom all over the world to co-operate with this flag in freeing one-fifth of the human race.' And the audience rose and saluted the flag.

The Abhinav Bharat Society got itself busy with producing revolutionary literature and collecting pistols and smuggling them into India. At one meeting the Society decided to depute Senapati Bapat and Hemchandra Das to study the art of manufacturing bombs. They learnt it from a Russian revolutionary in Paris and bought a bomb manual from him. Then Bapat, Das and Hotilal Verma left for India with cyclostyled copies of the bomb manual. An effective liaison had already been established between the Abhinav Bharat of London and its counterparts in India. The Abhinav Bharat had its own intelligence system, and some of its members had intercepted in Bombay a message from the British Government about Tilak's impending arrest. 'The Deccan', to quote Sir Valentine Chirol who was then in India and sending despatches to *The Times*, was 'honey-combed with secret societies.'

British newspapers and politicians were getting alarmed at the activities of Indians in Britain. The *Standard* summed up their feelings thus: 'It is beyond question that not a few of the highly intelligent Indians in our Universities and reading for the Bar are striving their utmost by such means, particularly to accustom the minds of young rising generation to the idea of an armed revolt.' So much perturbed were British politicians that a meeting was organized under the presidency of an ex-Governor of Bombay, Lord Lamington, to adopt means to 'socialise' the revolutionary Indian element. One of the speakers at the meeting was Sir William Lee Warner, who called the Indian revolutionary Kunjavihari Bhattachrya 'a dirty nigger'. The remark naturally provoked the Indian section of the audience, and Vasudeo Bhattacharya, a former editor of the *Sandhya* and the *Yugantar*, struck a blow on the face of Sir William. Vasudeo was prosecuted and fined Rs. 20. The Secretary of State, Morley, appointed a committee to consider what could be done to 'afford Indian students protection from agitators, who lie in wait for them and provide them with lodgings, the atmosphere of which reeks with disloyalty to the British Crown.'

In the later part of 1907 Krishna Varma left for Paris and settled there, but the *Indian Sociologist* continued to be published in London. In the December issue of the paper there was a significant passage: 'It seems that any agitation in India must be carried on secretly and that the only methods which can bring the English Government to its sense are the Russian methods vigorously and incessantly applied until the British relax their tyranny and are driven out of the country. No one can foresee what rule will be laid down or line of action defined for any particular course. That will probably depend on local conditions and circumstances, but it is likely that as a general principle the Russian method will begin with Indian officials rather than Europeans.' The Russian method was bomb-throwing.

In India the revolutionary work was first organized by Barindra Kumar Ghose, the younger brother of Aurobindo Ghose. Born in England, Barindra returned to India in 1902 full of revolutionary ideas. He used a few existing associa-

tions to spread his ideas, but was on the whole disappointed with the results. Then for two years he toured various districts of Bengal, meeting people and preaching independence. In the beginning of 1907 he formed a group of 14 or 15 young men; one of them was Ullaskar Dutta. They collected revolvers and rifles; Dutta learnt the making of explosives. The group was named the Anusilan Samiti (society for the promotion of culture and training). It operated from Calcutta. A branch office was later started at Dacca. The Dacca Samiti developed so enormously that at one time it had 500 branches in towns and villages of Bengal.

Of all the revolutionary parties, the Dacca Samiti was throughout the whole period the most powerful body. It was founded by Pullin Behari Das. 'The National School of Dacca, where Das and Bhupendra Chandra Ray were teachers, was one of the chief training and recruiting grounds of the Samiti.' The other institution in the district to contribute its mite was the Sonarang National School, which was founded by Makhan Lal Sen, who became leader of the Samiti after Das was deported. 'While its organization was most compact in Mymensingh and Dacca, it was active from Dinajpur in the north-west to Chittagong in the south-east and from Cooch Behar on the north-west to Midnapore on the south-west.' Outside Bengal its members were found working in Assam, Bihar, the Punjab, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, and at Poona. They were all interconnected.

Besides these societies, there were less formal groups sharing the same principles and united in creating an atmosphere which would swell their ranks and facilitate their operations. The atmosphere was to be created by building up public opinion by means of newspapers, songs, literature, preaching, secret meetings, and associations. 'Unrest must be created—unrest whose historical name is revolt.'

Bengal revolutionaries adopted the Wahabi techniques of invoking religion to attract to their movement not only educated men but also common people to whom religion made a forceful appeal. Inspiration was derived from Kali, the Goddess of Sakti (power). Mazzini and Garibaldi were also to be emulated, but with religious texts sanctioning war against

evil, which British rule was, the message of revolution spread rapidly. Pamphlets were produced and distributed justifying war against the British, exhorting the people to learn the art of making weapons and suggesting political dacoities for raising money.

The secondary English schools and in a lesser degree the colleges of Bengal were regarded by the revolutionaries as their most fruitful recruiting centres. There were personal talks preceded by the distribution of revolutionary literature. Desperate preparations were being made for a revolt in May 1907; but it did not come off because concerted action could not be organized. The eruption however came in sporadic cases of violence. In October 1907 two plots to blow up the Bengal Lieutenant Governor's train were discovered. In December, the train in which he was travelling, was actually derailed by a bomb near Midnapore. The explosion made a hole five feet wide by five feet deep. Another attempt was aimed at a British employee of the East Bengal Government, named Allen. He escaped with serious injuries. On April 11, 1908 a bomb was thrown into the house of the Mayor of Chandranagar, until recently a French possession.

But on April 30 a fatal outrage took place. Two Bengali young boys, Khudiram Bose and Prafullah Chaki, belonging to the Revolutionary Party of Manicktolla, threw a bomb on a carriage at Muzaffarpur which, they believed, belonged to the district judge, named Kingsford. He was to be made the target of the fatal attack because, as chief presidency magistrate of Calcutta, he had tried the cases against the *Jugantar, Bande Matram, Sandhya, and Banasakti* newspapers and imposed heavy sentences on their editors; he had also sentenced a revolutionary, Sushil Kumar Sen, to a wripping of 15 stripes. But the carriage was not Kingsford's and the bomb killed the wife and daughter of a much respected and supposedly pro-Indian European, Pringle Kennedy. The two bomb-throwers were arrested. Chaki shot himself dead on arrest, and Bose, yet a student, was sentenced to death and hanged. He was hailed by the people as a martyr. 'His photograph had an immense sale, and by-and-by the young Bengalee bloods took to wearing dhoties with Khudiram Bose's name woven into the gar-

ments.'[6] On the date of his execution, 'the boys of several schools in the province attended barefooted and without shirts and in some cases fasting. At Jamalpur, the demonstration lasted a week.'[7]

Tracking down sources of the murder of the Kennedys led to the discovery of a series of revolutionary preparations. On May 2, searches were made at a number of houses in Calcutta, and bombs, dynamites, cartridges, and correspondence were seized. In Manicktolla, a suburb of Calcutta, a bomb factory was discovered. It had been established by some young Bengalis to 'paralyse the Government by direct action'. The same day, Barindra Kumar Ghose, the chief brain of the organization, and some of his associates were rounded up by the Calcutta police. In all 36 persons were arrested on the suspicion of complicity with the Muzaffarpore murders and the bomb factory at Manicktolla. They were sent up for trial for waging war against the King and forming a conspiracy and collecting arms with the same object, and sentenced to different terms—Barindra, Ullaskar Dutt and Upendranath Bannerjea to life transportation. (The former two were first sentenced to death but had the sentence reduced on appeal.) The accused of this case, commonly known as the Alipore Bomb Case, were mostly teachers and students—Birendranath Ghosh was 17½ years, Narendranath Bakshi 18, Bibhuti Bhushan Sarkar 20, Dutt 22. The High Court held that the accused had collected arms, ammunition, explosives and seditious literature with the purpose of waging war against the King.

Another case, which was an offshoot of the Alipore Conspiracy Case, arose from the murder of Narendranath Gossain, an accused in the Conspiracy Case, by two co-accused, Kanai Lal Dutt and Satyendranath Bose. Gossain had given the police clues with which they succeeded in rounding up his colleagues. For this breach of pledge his two colleagues did him to death in the jail itself with the arms they managed to get from outside. Dutt and Bose were both hanged. Nearly 50,000 people lined the streets of Kalighat as the remains of the two revolu-

[6] Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, p. 97

[7] Bengal Education Report, pp. 408-9

tionaries were carried from the Central Jail of Calcutta to the cremation ground. 'The funeral demonstration of these two political assassins proved such a staggering revelation to the Government that from the day forward, the cremation of political assassins outside the jail compound was no longer permitted.'[3]

The Muzaffarnagar murder case gave an opportunity to the Bombay Government who had been 'awaiting a good case against Tilak, to take action.' This was the general tendency of the rulers during the freedom movement: a man carrying on propaganda for home rule or independence in a way not tolerable to the authorities, though within the limits of the law, would be arrested on any pretext and sentenced to any term by the magistracy which was part of the executive. It exposed the British profession of adherence to the rule of law: the man was declared guilty first and then the authorities, making this decision, waited for evidence to come into their possession. Viceroy Minto himself wrote on a Government file in the case of Tilak: 'The present is not a time to give a well-known agitator like Tilak the benefit of any leniency; and I certainly think we should call the serious attention of the Bombay Government to the possibility of proceeding against his press in respect to the article in the *Kesari* of the 9th June.' The secretary of the department concerned, conveying the Viceroy's wish to the Bombay Government, said: 'I venture to think that it is most desirable that we should deal Tilak as shrewed a blow as we can. He is by far the ablest and most dangerous of the rebel party in this country, and his complete overthrow will stagger that party and show to all waverers the strength of the Government. It is not enough to imprison him when we can suppress his newspaper. The *Kesari* has a circulation of 20,000 which is an enormous circulation for India. This is no time for rose-water administration, and I am confident that the great mass of moderate men will be glad to see Tilak completely overthrown. He ruined the National Congress at Surat, and his methods have given great offence to the Moderate Party.'

The meaning is obvious. The moderates who conducted and

[3] Prithvi's Chandra Ray, *Life & Times of C. R. Das*, p. 72

controlled the Congress and merely passed resolutions at annual sessions would retain their position only if Tilak was removed from the scene, and this could be done only by a long prison term. Under the British system of jurisprudence, solemnly enforced in India, lawful propaganda was permissible, and the extremists had not done anything which could be interpreted as defiance of the law of the land; but since they were carrying the demand for substantial reforms to the masses and making the dumb millions interested in the affairs of the country, the rulers preferred the moderates to them and decided to suppress the extremists even if the enforcement of their decision meant polluting the sacredness of the judiciary. Because the *Kesari* had a circulation of 20,000 and because through it political education was being disseminated, Government decided to suppress the spirit—Tilak—behind it. This must be done even if the law was to be suppressed. Let there be no misunderstanding that Tilak was an exception; most arrests and convictions were executive decisions rather than those of the law. Tilak's case is a well-known example.

Tilak was prosecuted for the leading articles he published in the *Kesari* of May 12 and June 19, 1908. In the course of the former, he said: 'We, along with other newspapers, have frankly told Government that if they resorted to Russian methods of repression, Indians too shall have to imitate the Russian revolutionaries in their defence. To exercise every sort of oppression on the subjects and at the same time to expect them to bear everything with meekness is to exhibit an utter ignorance of ordinary human nature.... Our rulers seem to desire that the indignation felt for their measures should never overstep certain prescribed bounds. The Muzaffarpur outrage will teach a lesson to Government on the vanity of this desire. Government can, of course, suppress such outrages with a high hand, but that will not effect a radical cure of the disease.... The remedies, therefore, must be prescribed with due foresight. The fact must be recognized by Government that these excesses on the part of an inconsiderate few are due to the refusal of Government to give due consideration to the suggestions for reform in the administration which the people have begun to dislike.

They must, therefore, with true statesmanship, try to avoid bringing matters to a crisis. We, on our part, do not think that our duty ends with condemning the Muzaffarpur outrage. We regret the occurrence, but we are of opinion that so long as the causes which give rise to it are allowed to remain, it will be impossible to prevent its repetition. It lies entirely in the hands of the Government to prevent the growth of nihilism in India. Reform in the administration is the only way to kill this new Upas tree.'

In the other article, which was quite long, Tilak again discussed the coming of the bomb to India: 'Manufacture and possession of arms can be prevented by law and police supervision, but the same cannot be said about the bomb. It resembles more a magical charm than a visible object manufactured in a factory. The bomb required by hot-headed madcaps, bent on violence, does not require large quantities of materials for their manufacture as was shown by the bomb factory unearthed at Calcutta. It appears that Government have failed to learn a lesson from the discovery. No law possesses the power to keep the knowledge of the manufacture of bombs from those that are bent upon using them, for such knowledge is no longer regarded as a secret in Europe. It is still a secret in India, but if a policy of repression succeeds in adding to the number of hot-headed persons in the country, the knowledge will in no time spread to other parts of India from Bengal.'

A verdict of guilty was ensured by empanelling a jury which consisted of seven Europeans and two Indians. (The same device was adopted in the first conviction of Tilak in 1897.) The entire European community was hostile to Tilak, and their Press had been clamouring for months that he deserved to be clamped in jail. As in 1897, the Indian jurors gave a verdict of not guilty, and all the seven Europeans of guilty. The obliging judge, who was an Indian, sentenced Tilak to six years transportation. The judge held the articles as 'seething with sedition'. He said: 'They preach violence; they speak of murders with approval', and addressing Tilak, he added: 'You hail the advent of the bomb in India as if something has come to India for its good. The cowardly and atrocious act of committing murders with bombs seems to meet with your appro-

val.' Tilak served the sentence in an unhealthy prison cell, exposed to sun and rain, in Mandalay.

Many papers in India and quite a few in Britain characterised the sentence as a miscarriage of justice. Hyndman, the socialist leader, wrote in the *Justice* of London: 'The conviction of the noble patriot and martyr, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was as gross a miscarriage of justice as has ever been known under our carpetbagger despotism in India. There is on justice for Indians.' The *India*, also of London, suggested that the trial and sentence could not be regarded as 'a triumphant illustration of the impartiality of British justice. It certainly does not strike us in that light and those who have set the engine of the law in motion after this fashion may rest assured that they have dealt a staggering blow to the cause of constitutional reform in the Western Presidency.' Two of the Indian editors who had criticised the judgment were proceeded against for contempt of court.

Tilak was spirited away no doubt by Government machination, but the event contributed more to the prevalent discontent than to peace for the authorities. A wave of anger and consternation surged throughout the country. In Bombay the situation was the worst; a large number of the 100,000 mill workers went on strike. For a week the city was in the hands of the mob. Europeans whom the crowds happened to meet in the streets were assaulted. Liquor shops were wrecked. Police parties opened fire, and the men retaliated with stones. The firing, which was resorted to daily for six days, killed, according to unofficial accounts, 30 and wounded about 100: the official figures were 14 and 30 respectively. There was complete strike in the city, all shops remaining closed for days together; and the authorities had to use coercive measures to bring the bazaars to life again. There was a day's strike in most towns of the country; schools and colleges were also closed and the severe sentence passed on Tilak was condemned at excited public meetings. What the authorities in India regarded as prudence was now condemned as folly even by the Secretary of State, who indignantly wrote to the Bombay Governor: 'I won't go over the Tilak ground again beyond saying that if you had done me the honour to seek my advice

as well as that of your lawyers, I am clear that it should not have been so dangerous as the mischief that will be done by this sentence. Of course, the milk is now spilled and there is an end to it.'

The authorities in India did not heed the advice which was meant to be used for future guidance and went ahead with their repressive policy. A larger number of political workers suspected of association with Tilak were arrested. Members of the All-India Volunteers League, of which Tilak was president, were harassed and victimised. Government however succeeded in their mission, which was to suppress the extremists; Tilak's party was extinguished, and the moderates heaved a sigh of relief. The Congress was once again a docile body.

But the other side of the picture made Government victory a boomerang. The bomb was now considered more dependable than the constitutional agitation, and after Tilak's imprisonment many new secret societies came into being. Papers following the Tilak line now wrote with ever more daring. The Congress which was again displaying its loyalty to the British Crown was called an organization of sycophants. In vain were the moderates, like Gokhale, declaring with all the eloquence at their command that 'considering the difficulties of the position, Britain has done very well in India.' He even endeavoured to keep students away from politics. 'The active participation of students in political agitation really tends to lower the dignity and the responsible character of public life and impair its true effectiveness.' Here again his advice was spurned.

But the rulers, both in India and Britain, believed quite strongly that another dose of Reforms expanding the legislative councils, seemingly substantial but without any substance of power, would meet the demand of the situation, because it would satisfy the moderates, who themselves did not ask for anything substantial but merely more seats for Indians and a system of election. They feared the bomb—the only fear remaining after the suppression of the extremists—but were not prepared to brace themselves to the suggestion that it would ever assume a menacing proportion. Firmly dominated by this

conviction, the Secretary of State declared in Parliament, while introducing the new Reform Bill that India would never be given a system of parliamentary government. 'If I were attempting to set up a parliamentary system in India, or if it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it.' He emphatically asserted: 'If my existence either officially or corporeally were to be prolonged twenty times longer than either of them is likely to be, a parliamentary system in India is not at all the goal to which I would for one moment aspire.' (Some might suggest that Morley's bluntness, apparently out of place in the context of Indian situation, may have been for the benefit of those hot-headed Englishmen in Britain and India, who believed in ruling India with full-blooded autocracy.)

In India the Viceroy had already prepared the ground for the reception of the Reform proposals by rendering the extremists ineffective. One arrow was however yet to be acquired to make the armoury of legislation for repression complete. It was the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which provided 'for the more speedy trial of certain offences and for the prohibition of associations dangerous to the public peace'. He wrote to the Secretary of State (November 30, 1908): 'The repressive legislation should precede your announcement of Reforms in Parliament. I am most anxious that we should get our disagreeable work over before your announcement is made. We must give the medicine first and then do all we can to take the taste away. If we were to follow up your announcement with stiff legislation and deportation we should make a fatal mistake. The taste of the last dose would remain in the patient's mouth. I want your announcement to be received with a flourish of trumpets, and we must run no risk of marring its effect.'[9]

Two days after the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, ten Bengalis were deported without trial. And after another five days came, according to plan, the Secretary of State's Reform Bill. Minto considered his plan as a psychological stroke which would bring rain-laden clouds over the hot

[9] Mary Minto, p. 255

wind that had been blowing in the country. The moderates were happy at the announcement, and their foremost spokesman, Gokhale, greeted it with reverberant joy—reverberant it was because it was re-echoed by most moderates. He said the reforms proposals 'are generous and fair'. The 1908 Congress (held at Madras) adopted a resolution telling the people that the announcement was 'a large and liberal instalment of the reforms needed to give the people of this country a substantial share in the management of their affairs and to bring the administration into closer touch with their wants and feelings.

The new reforms did not indicate any intention to share power with Indians, but it will have to be conceded that there was in them the proof of the result of the last ten years' agitational and the so-called seditious activites outside the Congress. If they were warmly received by the moderates and their Congress, it was because they were in excess of what their efforts deserved; and if they were ignored by the progressive and revolutionary opinions, it was because there was no trace in them of home rule, nothing short of which would satisfy them. Paradoxically, therefore, while the extremist and terrorist variety of politics accelerated the pace of reforms, the fruits, whatever they might be, were addressed to and appropriated by the moderates.

The Indian Councils Act of 1909, commonly called the Minto-Morley Reforms, raised the number of the 'additional members' of the central Legislative Council from sixteen to a 'maximum' of sixty. Of this number, twenty-eight were to be officials and the rest non-officials. The seeming non-official majority was reduced to minority by the provision authorising the Viceroy to nominate five non-official members. The other non-official members were to be elected by local bodies, landowners, chambers of commerce, and Muslims. In the provinces the number of members was similarly substantially raised, care being taken to retain official majority by the requisite minimum margin. But the question of majority or minority was of no consequence at all, because the Viceroy and the Governors were not bound to accept the decisions of the Councils. A conspicuous change resulting from the reforms was the reservation of a seat for an Indian on the Viceroy's

executive council; its significance lay in the fact that for the first time an Indian, though of proved loyalty to the British, sat in a council that had been a close preserve of British nationals. Indians made a similar entry into the Executive Councils of several provinces.

The political developments in India since the Revolt of 1857 till the Minto-Morley Reforms and their reactions in the higher councils of the ruling class are an interesting psychological study. The Revolt compelled the British to realize how 'perilous' was 'the experiment of continuing to legislate for millions of people with few means of knowing, except by rebellion, whether the laws suit them or not.' This led to the inclusion of a few Indians in the legislative councils in 1862 and onward. In the seventies the discontent manifested itself in a different way, and in the eighties there was an agitation of the constitutional variety. The rulers again thought of the same remedy—expansion of the legislative councils—and a little bigger dose was given in 1892. The events of the years that followed were much more disturbing, impressing on the rulers' mind that they could not rule in the old way any longer, and then came the reforms of 1909. By the periodical expansion of the legislative councils the country was getting no economic relief. The exploitation was going on unabated; in the councils, however, there was definite foundation of their growth to the position of self-governing institutions. The political consciousness having come to stay and so also the determination of the people not to let the rulers enjoy the empire with peace, all that the rulers could do was to encourage issues that might stem the rising tide of unrest, even though for short spells. One such issue was Hindu-Muslim differences.

11

Communalism in Politics

At the Congress of 1909 held at Lahore, the Hindu-Muslim question was inevitably discussed in an atmosphere of heightened excitement. The subject was the system of separate electrorate, on which the Congress expressed 'its strong sense of disapproval' because it was based on 'religion'. The Indian Councils Act of 1909 did not provide for separate electorates, but the regulations made under it by the Government of India did so; they carried out the intention of the framers of the Act. Whether the Muslims should have separate electorate was no doubt a debatable point in the context of the then trend in Indian politics; what offended the non-Muslims and the Congress was the discrimination that resulted from other provisions of the regulations. In addition to the separate electorate, the Muslims got direct franchise also, which was denied to Hindus and other communities. Muslims who paid income-tax on an income of Rs. 3,000 or more or land revenue in the same amount, or who were graduates of five years' standing were made voters. The Muslims' right to a distinct treatment was recognized on ground that in all provinces, with the exception of the Punjab and the new province of East Bengal and Assam, they were in a minority in the population.

The Congress president, Madan Mohan Malaviya, devoted part of his address to this question. He deprecated the entire scheme of separate electorates and particularly referred to the principle on the basis of which protection had been provided for the Muslims. He asked why, if minorities were to be protected by special devices, 'the Hindu minorities in the said two provinces have been left out severely in the cold?' Another provision of the scheme was also interpreted as being against

the Hindus. The electoral colleges of municipal boards and district boards could, under the Act of 1892, elect an outsider also to the provincial councils, but the Act of 1909 restricted the candidature for the councils in Bombay and Madras only to the members of the boards. The change was compared with the invidious favour shown to the Muslims; they now enjoyed a measure of direct franchise which the Hindus did not get under the regulations. A certain amount of envy was created against the Muslims, and even Malaviya said in his presidential address that Muslims, who 'did not trouble themselves with any question of reform in the system of administration,' were chosen for special favours. The Hindus recalled to their minds all those political agitations, violent and constitutional, which had shaken British statesmen into the realization that peace in India would be difficult to maintain without a further and substantial instalment of reforms. They also recalled that prominent Muslism leaders and their British well-wishers had been constantly advising the Muslims to hold aloof from politics. Nothing could be more conducive to the growth of a communal atmosphere than this development.

What was the genesis, so far as overt activities were concerned, of the demand for separate representation for the Muslims? The Act of 1892 and the Rules made thereunder did not provide for representation of Indians as such but gave, in the interest of British rule, excessive representation to vested interests like the landed aristocracy and the world of commerce, in which the Hindus happened to be predominant. In the Councils, as they emerged after the enforcement of the provisions of the Act, British rulers and Muslim leaders counted the number of Muslims, only to find that they were fewer than their proportion in the population warranted. Amusingly enough, they were looking for a result which could not have flowed from the provisions of the Act or the Rules. The initial mistake was of the rulers, but the Hindus were made the target of Muslim attacks, as if they were responsible for the provisions which resulted in the Muslims not getting adequate representation.

In fact, attention to the inadequacy of Muslim representation, in the Councils began to be given years after the birth of the

expanded legislatures under the Act of 1892. For such Muslim leaders as were not prejudicially influenced, there was a brighter side to look at. In the local bodies—municipal boards and district boards—where, unlike the councils, men of ordinary means could also become members, Muslims enjoyed a quite satisfactory position; nay, their representation was higher than was warranted by their numbers. There could be no better proof of the fact that voters, whether Hindus or Muslims, voted for more suitable candidates regardless of the candidates' religion. And there can be no clearer indication of the fact that separate electorates were looked upon as an impediment in the way of political advance. It was a British governor (Bampfylde Fuller) who said openly and proudly, at the time of Hindu-Muslim riots some time after the partition of Bengal, that of his 'two wives, the Mohammedan one was the favourite'. According to Nevinson, 'the Mohammedans genuinely believed that the British authorities were ready to forgive them for all excesses.' There was reason to believe that British officers, headed by men like Fuller, contributed their quota of mischief to promoting Hindu-Muslim riots. Sir Henry Cotton, for many years an officer of the Bengal Civil Service and later a member of the British Parliament, in his *Indian and Home Memories*, laid an open charge at the door of British rulers: 'The Mohammedans of East Bengal are almost all descended from low-caste or aboriginal Hindoos who long ago embraced Islam in hope of social improvement or from hard necessity. There was never any cause for quarrel between Hindoos and Mohammedans as such.... For the first time in history a religious feud was established between them by the partition of the province. For the first time the principle was enunciated in official circles: Divide and Rule! The Mohammedans were officially favoured in every possible way.'

There is yet a much higher authority, Ramsay MacDonald (later Prime Minister of Britain), to reinforce the contention that 'Divide and Rule' was the policy of the then rulers. In his book, *The Awakening of India*, published two years after the passage of the Act of 1909, he said: 'Some of the far-seeing members of the Mohammedan community are already beginning to feel that they have made a mistake. Several spoke to

me with bitterness about the way certain of their leaders had consented to play a game planned for them by Anglo-Indian officials, while in the minds of others who were still in favour of what had been done, a knowledge was dawning that there were dangers ahead and that they might have been better protected if they had not asked for so much.' At another place in the book, he wrote: 'The Mohammedan leaders are inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials; these officials have pulled wires at Simla and in London and sowed discord between the Hindu and the Mohammedan communities by showing the Muslim special favours.'

In 1906 the wire-pulling produced a tangible effect. The English principals of the Aligarh Muslim College had been playing a leading role in communal politics. The then principal, Archibald, visited Simla in the summer of 1906 and sent from there, in consultation with the officials, a letter to an eminent Muslim leader of Aligarh, telling him that 'important Muslim leaders of all provinces' should wait in a deputation on the Viceroy. He also indicated the line to be adopted in the request to be made in the address to the Viceroy: they 'should represent that the system of nomination and not election should be adopted as Muslims would benefit only from the system of nomination.' As only men of proved loyalty to the British were to be members of the deputation, there was no fear of anybody taking notice of the broad fact that in local bodies, the system of election had given Muslims a higher proportion of seats. The mischief was obvious; there should be an all-India body which might publicly declare that the Muslims were opposed to the 'hazardous' political demands of different parties and groups in the country. The draft of the address differed in details from Archibald's line, but the purpose was adequately served. The Viceroy told the deputationists that 'the Mohammedan community may rest assured that their rights and interests as a community will be safeguarded in any administrative reorganisation with which I am concerned.'

It was a rewarding development from the British point of view in the politics of the country. A flash of jubilation ran across the official world in Simla. The overflowing joy ran

into correspondence, typical of which is a letter an official sent to the Viceroy's wife, Mary. He said: 'I must send your Excellency a line to say that a very big thing has happened today, a work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition.' Mary herself recorded in her *Journal* of October 1: 'This has been a very eventful day: as some one said to me, "an epoch in Indian history". We are aware of the feelings of unrest that exist throughout India and the dissatisfaction that prevails amongst people of all classes and creed. The agitators have been most anxious to foster this feeling and naturally have done their utmost to secure the cooperation of this vast community (Muslims). The younger generations were wavering, inclined to throw in their lot with the advanced agitators of the Congress, and a howl went up that the loyal Mohammedans were not to be supported and that the agitators were to obtain their demands through agitation.' In a section of the Press in Britain the Simla performance was hailed as a great achievement. The 'wisdom' of the Muslims was praised and the Congress and Bengal agitators were ridiculed.

The Muslim organization was named the All-India Muslim League. In 1908 when other parties were giving the rulers a considerable amount of anxiety, the League (at its annual session) deprecated the 'ideal of self-government' and urged unconditional loyalty to the British. But those engaged in anti-British activities completely ignored the League; a considerable section of Muslims took no notice of it. A new sapling of mischief had no doubt been planted and it would bear fruits when it grew, but at that time it could not help the British to stem the political tide, and they had to add quite a large number of Indian members to the legislative councils by the Act of 1909. In the future also the policy of 'Divide and Rule', while sidetracking part of the attention of the struggle for freedom, did not succeed in checking political activities.

The self-aggrandising loyalists in the Muslim community had no doubt undertaken to oppose the Congress and all activities against British rule and dance to the tune of the rulers, but

some officials made the mistake of expecting subservience in every walk of life, even in educational institutions managed by Muslims. It so happened that on one occasion, the Aligarh school of Muslims was snubbed by the Lieutenant-Governor of the province on a petty matter. In February 1909 he visited the Aligarh College and expressed the view, in reply to the address presented to him by the College authorities, that there should not be more than sixty students in a class and that a teacher should not ordinarily take more than four periods. After the Lieutenant-Governor was gone, the College secretary, Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk, asked the Principal (Archibald) to send him a time-table. The principal grew furious: the secretary had no business to make this demand and interfere with the work of the principal. Archibald, with a view to displaying his anger, sent in his resignation, forwarding a copy to the Lieutenant-Governor, who was Patron of the College. As Patron he had no authority to dabble in the internal affairs of the College; yet he called for an explanation from the secretary and gave his judgment in favour of the principal.

The self-respect of the Muslims was roused and an agitational mood created. The trustees of the College held a meeting and contended that the Lieutenant-Governor had exceeded his authority. Protest meetings were held in a number of towns of India and copies of the proceedings therefore were sent to the Lieutenant-Governor. The statesman in him yielded to this demonstration of protest, which he never expected from loyal Muslims. At his own suggestion a deputation met him, and he withdrew his order. But he was left wondering what could possibly be the cause of this indignant agitation? Was it the Muslim League that had created the seed of a new spirit? It was a fact; organization is power. He therefore influenced the Aga Khan, the permanent president of the League, to shift the head office of the organization from Aligarh to Lucknow. It was a welcome development; it ended the European principal's stewardship of Muslim politics.

The rise in temper was reflected at the 1910 annual session of the Muslim League. The chairman, Syed Nabiullah, made an attack on the bureaucracy and asserted that the civil service officers were instrumental in creating dissensions. The League

stretched out its hand for Hindu-Muslim unity, and at its instance the leaders of the two communities gathered in a conference at Allahabad in January 1911. Not much was achieved, but the ground was prepared for further conciliatory talks.

In 1911 Muslim resentment against the British jumped up to a high degree. The rising tempo of political activities and the continuing terror of bomb outrages (discussed in the next chapter), both of which owed their origin to the partition of Bengal, were racking the nerves of the rulers. There had been discussions whether the undoing of Curzon's mischief would help in easing the tension, and it was decided to annul the partition. The formal announcement was made in 1911 at the time of the visit of the King to India. The annulment imparted the same urgency to Muslim politics as partition had done to nationalist politics. How could Muslims now reconcile themselves to the annulment when they had been told again and again by Curzon that East Bengal had been created for their good? The matter naturally came up before the next annual session of the League held at Calcutta in March 1912, and a new chapter was opened; the new breeze was pleasant even to the Hindus. The president, Nawab Salimullah, lamenting the annulment announcement, said that while the new province practically gave Muslims no additional advantage, it created a gulf between the two communities. It was not correct to say, he asserted, that the partition was the result of Hindu-Muslim differences; the real difference arose from the refusal of Muslims to join Hindus in revolutionary activities against the British. In his presidential speech was to be found a definite desire for rapprochement.

Then came events in the Middle East, shaking the foundations of the Ottoman Empire to which most Indian Muslims, particularly the educated among them, were attached because of the existence of the Khilafat (Caliphate) in Turkey. The process of the dismemberment of the Empire that began in 1911 with Italy's invasion of Tripoli added to the Indian Muslims' anti-British feeling; they believed that Britain was at the back of the hostilities against Turkey.

As if to complete the process of the withdrawal of Muslim submission to the British came the world war, in which Turkey

became an ally of Germany. The leading Muslims in India, who in later years rose to great eminence in politics, engaged themselves in anti-British propaganda. Slowly and steadily they were gravitating towards the Congress whose aim was to agitate for full-fledged self-government. Hostility to the British was limited to individual activities; the Muslim League repeatedly professed loyalty to Government as the Congress did. But in 1913 it transformed itself into a political body and its object henceforth became the promotion among Indians of loyalty to the British Crown, the protection of the rights of Mohammedans, and without detriment to the foregoing object, the attainment of the system of self-government suitable to India. A resolution adopted at the 1913 session stressed the necessity of Hindus and Muslims joining hands to work for national progress. The Congress responded to the gesture, and some Congress leaders attended the League session. Men like Shibli Nomani read poems deriding the word 'suitable' in the new constitution of the League—the same Nomani, who in 1908 had told Muslims that 'fidelity to the ruling power was a religious duty for a Muslim'. There was no annual session of the League in 1914. At the next year's session the League appointed, on the motion of M.A. Jinnah, a committee 'to draw up, in consultation with other communities, a scheme of political reform'. The Congress and the League were now holding their annual sessions simultaneously and at the same place. The delegates of the one invariably attended the sessions of the other.

In the new Muslim approach to politics there was little to promote secularism or a secular Indian community. To Muslims, the pre-requisite of unity in politics was the recognition of their community as a separate political entity, which clearly meant that the Congress should affirm the system of separate electorate. The Congress had been wedded to unadulterated secularism; it was now faced with an unenviable situation. It had to accept the Muslims' co-operation on their own terms; insistence on secularism would have meant estrangement. In 1906, at the annual sessions of the Congress and the League, a scheme of communal representation and constitutional reforms was drawn up and adopted. The former part is known

as the Lucknow Pact and is a landmark in India's political history. It laid down that adequate provisions should be made for the representation of important minorities by election, and the Mohammedans should be represented through special electorates on the provincial legislative councils in the following proportion: Punjab—one-half of the elected Indian members; U. P.—30 per cent; Bengal—40 per cent; Central Provinces—15 per cent; Madras—15 per cent; Bombay—one-third; provided that no Mohammedan shall participate in any of the other elections to the Imperial or Provincial Legislative Councils, save and except those by electorates representing special interests.

The year's League session was presided over by Jinnah, who uttered some significant words which became the foundation of the edifice he was to build a quarter of a century later: 'We have a vast continent inhabited by 315 millions of people sprung from various racial stocks, inheriting various cultures, and professing a variety of religious creeds. This stupendous human group, thrown together under one physical and political environment, is still in various stages of intellectual and moral growth. All this means a great diversity of outlook, purpose, and endeavour.' Nevertheless he emphasized that Indians were determined to prove their fitness for self-government; the Hindu-Muslim rapprochement was the sign of the birth of a united India. He entirely identified the political objective of the Muslims with those of Hindus. And he did not forget to emphasize that the Muslims should be allowed to choose their own Caliph. He claimed that he himself and other leaders of the Muslim League were the chosen leaders of the seventy million Muslims of India.

The second part of the scheme (relating to reforms) demanded that in the reconstruction of the Empire (after the war was over), India should be raised from the status of a dependency to that if an equal partner as a self-governing dominion. The Provincial Legislative Councils should consist of four-fifths of elected and one-fifth of nominated members. The members should be elected directly by the people on as broad a franchise as possible.

But who would enforce the scheme—the two parts of it? The answer obviously was, the British. Since the days of the con-

stitutional agitation, no Muslim group or organization had caused the British any harassment; and in 1909 they ensured the continuance of the Muslims' unqualified loyalty by granting them separate electorates with a measure of direct election. There was nothing in the recent change in the Muslim attitude to warrant a change in the British policy of showing greater consideration to Muslims in future instalments of reforms in order to feed the belief that Muslims could get more than Hindus if they kept aloof from active politics. Though the Lucknow Pact was a solemn agreement, the British could always hope that an additional concession to Muslims would make that Pact a waste paper. Therefore, it was quite easy for the British to undo the entire basis of the unity accomplished at Lucknow. In the Pact itself, there was a little loophole for mischief. It conceded to the Muslims considerably greater representation in all Muslim minority provinces than was warranted by their numerical proportion; but in the Muslim majority province of Bengal, the seats allotted to the community were short of the proportion by about 14 per cent. On the other hand, the weightage allowed to Muslims in the Muslim minority provinces was likely to be, as indeed it was, resented by Hindus. So, what was hailed as a solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem by the framers of the scheme could itself be used by mischief-mongers as a weapon to defeat the achievement.

So far as the reform part of the scheme was concerned, it was beyond the power of the moderate Congress and the more moderate League to create a degree of agitation sufficiently forceful to compel the rulers to concede the demand. The Congress could hardly take credit for activities that made the rulers realize that they could not stay on the old basis. The events leading to the next instalment of reforms were being enacted elsewhere, away from both the Congress platform and the League platform.

12

Revolutionary Activities

After the introduction of the Act of 1909 the terrorists were the only anti-British party whose activities became the subject of common talk. Any news about them was listened to with avidity, and the harsh judicial sentences passed on them created ever greater hatred towards the British. Many people pinned their faith in the bomb and believed that it had come to liberate the country. The murder of a single British officer was enough to create the effect of a country-wide movement on the minds of the people. Violence was condemned by the Congress and other parties and groups at their meetings, and a section of the Press did the same; but most of the people who had developed patriotic fervour relished the account of political dacoities, attacks on officials, and such other happenings. By suppressing the extremist movement, the rulers deprived themselves of a tolerable alternative to terrorism; perhaps they did not realize that after the suppression they would have to deal with much hotter stuff and that the moderates would cease to be acceptable to the people. The 1909 reforms, which were a very important event to the moderates, were ignored by the terrorists as of no significance or consequence to the country. They continued their activities as before.

In the Presidency of Bombay a spurt in the Mitra Mela's activities appeared with the arrest of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's brother, Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, in June 1908. The Mitra Mela had till then been engaged in distributing literature meant to produce anti-British feelings in the people. After Vinayak's departure to England, Ganesh had been the leading light of the Mela. His activities were naturally under constant watch of the authorities, and an intelligence report in June

led to a search of his house, where a lot of incriminating literature was found. Among the papers seized were pamphlets entitled 'Laghu Abhinav Bharat Mala (some rebellious poems), 'How the Russians Organize a Revolution', Vinayak's letters from England, etc. The book of rebellious poems had been published and distributed by Ganesh. He was sentenced to transportation for life and all his property was forfeited to the Crown. The Bombay High Court, confirming the sentence, observed: The writer's main object is to preach war against the present Government in the names of certain gods of the Hindus and certain warriors such as Shivaji. These names are a mere pretext for the text, which says, "Take up the sword and destory the Government because it is foreign and oppressive". For the purpose of finding the motive and intention of the writer it is unnecessary to import into the interpretation of the poems sentiments or ideas borrowed from the *Bhagwad Gita.*'

Distribution of revolutionary literature was only a preface to the main work which was to organize an armed revolt, or at any rate to create terror by killing Englishmen here and there. In February 1908 Vinayak Savarkar obtained from Paris a parcel of 20 Browning automatic pistols with ammunition, and sent them out to Bombay 'concealed in the false bottom of a box forming part of the luggage of one Chaturbhuj Amin, who had been employed as cook at the India House.' The pistols reached the destination a few days after the arrest of Ganesh. His associates held a secret meeting and decided that one of the pistols should be used to kill the district magistrate of Nasik, named Jackson. It was natural for the conspirators to think of Jackson first, because it was he who had committed Ganesh Savarkar to the sessions with the charge that he 'attempted to excite disaffection against the King and Government' and 'that he abetted the waging of war against the King'. The 21st of December 1909 was chosen for the deed because on that date at night Jackson was to visit a theatrical performance. Jackson arrived at the appointed time, and Anant Lakshman Kanhere, already posted there, shot him dead. The murder was followed by vigorous Government activity. Many arrests were made and searches instituted which led to a conspiracy trial, known as the Nasik Conspiracy Case. Thirty-eight men, all

but one Brahman, mostly Chitpavan, were put on their trial. Of them 27 were sentenced to various terms. In the murder case seven persons were convicted, three of them were executed, and of the others, three were sentenced to transportation for life and one to two years' rigorous imprisonment.

The Nasik trials gave the clue to the existence of the Nav Bharat Society at Gwalior and led to the institution of the Gwalior Conspiracy Case which was tried by a State tribunal. Fortyone persons—again all Brahman—were put up for trial; of them 22 belonged to the Nav Bharat Society and the rest to the Abhinav Bharat Society. Rule 4 of the Gwalior Society's constitution gives an idea of its objects and activities: 'There are two ways of carrying out the advice of obtaining liberty—education and agitation. Education includes swadeshi, boycott, national education, entire abstinence from liquor, religious festivities, lectures, libraries, etc., while agitation includes target-shooting, sword exercise, preparation of bombs and dynamites, procuring revolvers, learning and teaching the use of weapons and missiles. Should an occasion for a general rising in any province at proper time arise, all should help that cause and attain liberty. We are fully confident that the Aryan land is quite able to recover independence.' This society was yet at a preparatory stage when most of its members were arrested and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment in the Gwalior Conspiracy Case.

A month before the Jackson murder, there had been another incident of bomb-throwing. The target was the Viceroy, but he escaped unhurt. The incident occurred at Ahmedabad on November 13, 1909. Lord Minto, with his wife, was on a tour of western and southern India. When their carriage was passing through a street of Ahmedabad, a crowd gathered to witness the procession. There was a boy standing with a white ball in each hand, about the size of a turnip. He was holding them so openly that it never occurred to anybody that they could be bombs. Swiftly he raised his right arm and hurled a bomb; it fell on the sandy road. At once he threw the other which too missed the aim. That the balls were bombs was discovered only after the Viceregal party had passed when a bhishti (water carrier) happened to pick them and had his

right hand blown off. To quote the Viceroy's wife, Mary, 'the crowd seemed sullen, and the atmosphere lacked cordiality.'

The Government had already been endeavouring to liquidate the Mitra Mela and other revolutionary societies both in India and Britain. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was naturally their next aim after the conviction of Ganesh Savarkar. He had in London become the fountainhead of all terrorist activities in Maharashtra. He had launched a systematic propaganda of educating the youth in revolutionary methods. He translated the life of Mazzini into Marathi and had it circulated through his brother, Ganesh. He re-wrote the history of the Revolt of 1857 and published it under the title of 'The Indian War of Independence, 1857'. When he became leader of India House, he established the practice of reading passages from this book at Sunday meetings as if from a religious scripture. He caused Forst's 'Secret Societies of European Revolution, 1776-1876' to be studied by his party men in India. They could learn from this book the organization of the Russian Nihilists consisting of small circles of groups affiliated to sections, each member knowing only the members of the circle to which he belonged. In the introduction to his Marathi translation of Mazzini, he emphasized the importance of elevating politics to the rank of religion and argued that Ramdas, the preceptor of Shivaji, possessed the same spiritual essence as Mazzini did. He forcefully pointed out how Mazzini relied upon the youth of the country to attain independence. He gave his own meaning to the swadeshi and boycott movement: 'Not foreign goods but foreigners themselves must be boycotted.' In the Nasik Conspiracy case judgement, the Judge remarked in this connection: 'Much of the evidence suggested that this view of swadeshi has been generally accepted amongst the followers of the Savarkars in the Deccan during the last few years.'

It was under his leadership that members of India House began in 1909 to practise revolver shooting at a firing range in London. It produced an instantaneous effect. On July 1, one of the young men connected with India House, Madan Lal Dhingra, assassinated Colonel William Curzon Wyllie, political A. D. C. at India Office, in a gathering at the Imperial Institute

in London. Dhingra had planned to kill Lord Curzon of the Bengal Partition fame but did not succeed in that attempt. So far as Savarkar is concerned, an interesting anecdote is worth mentioning. A meeting of eminent Indians then present in London was called to condemn the deed. Prominent among those present were Sir Mancherjee Bhownagari, the Aga Khan," Surendranath Banerjee and B. C. Pal. After the speaking was over, Sir Mancherjee, who was presiding, declared that 'the meeting unanimously condemns Madan Lal Dhingra'. At once there ran across the meeting a dissentient voice, 'No, not unanimously'. Angrily the president asked: 'Who says, No? Your name please.' The voice shot back: 'It is me: my name is Savarkar.'

Dhingra was hanged on August 17, 1909. The law had of course to take its course, but the effect the murder produced in Britain was more favourable to India's cause than to the rulers. The background of India House activities and Indians' urge for freedom came to the forefront in private talks. Irish papers hailed Dhingra, and paying him glowing tributes said: 'Ireland honours Madan Lal Dhingra who was proud to lay down his life for the sake of his country.' In India too satisfaction was widespread, though it was expressed in somewhat mute tones. In London, India House published a pamphlet entitled Bande Mataram' strongly advocating political assassination in India: 'Terrorise the officials, English and Indian, and the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. The persistent execution of the policy that has been so gloriously inaugurated by Khoodiram Bose, Kanailal Dutt and other martyrs will soon cripple the British Government in India. This campaign of separate assassinations is the best conceivable method of paralysing the bureaucracy and of arousing the people.' The pamphlet was secretly circulated. Savarkar was supposed to be its author.

Searches and investigations made after the murder of Jackson led the authorities to think of Vinayak Savarkar as one of the leading spirits behind the conspiracy: it was the literature sent out by him which inspired young men to commit violent deeds and it was one of the pistols sent by him which was used to assassinate Jackson. A warrant of arrest was secured by the

Bombay Government from a magistrate and sent to the Bow Street Police Court in London to be enforced. Men of India House had, after the murder of Wyllie, been subjected to victimization. The University degrees of two of them, Shyamji Krishna Varma and Virendranath Chattopadhyay, were forfeited as a punishment for their writings and propaganda. Savarkar was being shadowed all the time by British intelligence sleuths. He was moving from place to place until, broken in health, he retired to Paris on the advice of his friends in January 1910.

On March 13, 1910 he returned to London; and as soon as he alighted from the train at the Victoria station, he was arrested on a telegraphic warrant from the Bombay Government under the Fugitive Offenders Act of 1881. The charges against him were: (1) waging war or abetting the waging of war against His Majesty the King Emperor of India; (2) conspiring to deprive his Majesty the King of the sovereignty of British India or a part if it; (3) procuring and distributing arms and abetting the murder of Jackson; (4) procuring and distributing arms in London and waging war from London; (5) delivering seditious speeches in India from January to March 1906, and in London from 1908 to 1909. He was ordered to be sent to India.

As the ship carrying him was about to anchor at Marseilles, Savarkar dodging his guards, jumped into the sea. The marine gendarmes who jumped after him pursued him, but could not overtake him. Savarkar reached the steep end of the harbour of Marseilles and climbed up the quay. He ran about five hundred yards, but had no money to hire a cab. He was on a foreign land and under the international law could not be arrested. But the steamer guards, ignoring the law, caught hold of him and put him back into the ship. Later there was a prolonged correspondence between the French Government and the British Government over the unlawful act. In vain did the former repeatedly demand the return of Savarkar. He was sentenced to transportation for life in the Nasik Conspiracy Case. In a separate case he was charged with abetment of murder, and again sentenced to tansporation for life. He was sent to the penal Settlement of Andmans to serve his term and

there was 'punished eight times during 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1914 for refusing to work and possession of forbidden articles'. The punishment consisted of six months solitary confinement (in 1911), seven days standing handcuffs (1912), and separate confinement on several occasions.

With the arrest and imprisonment of the leading men of the revolutionary groups in Maharashtra, terrorism was liquidated and did not reappear until 1921. The last trace manifested itself in 1911 at Satara where, on May 18, two coconut bombs, 27 revolver cartridges and six Manlicher cartridges were found in the house of a local resident. The discovery followed the conviction in 1910 of three Brahman youths who had set up in the district a branch of the Abhinav Bharat Society. The intelligence department proved superior to the organization of secret societies. The department had cast its network over all sources of the component parts of the proposed revolution. In 1914 some people again thought of resuming the Savarkar brothers' work, and the first thing they did was to arrange with a printing press to produce a quantity of 'seditious' pamphlets, including a formula for the preparation of bombs. The press was surprised and the effort was thwarted.

In Bengal the terrorist activities were more intensive and extensive. In 1909 there were ten cases of political dacoities in some of which gangs of 25 or 30 youths, equipped with arms and bombs, operated with their faces muffled and some wearing false beards. Many houses were searched, and from one 35 loaded revolvers and cartridges were found. One person was found to possess pills containing fatal doses of cynide of potassium for committing suicide if necessary. One incident may be narrated here by way of illustration. On October 11 seven or eight youths entered a railway train at Dacca in which were sitting three men carrying seven bags containing Rs. 23,000. They attacked the three men, shooting two, one fatally, and stabbing the third. Then they threw the money out of the train and jumped off. About half the money was recovered, but the men except one could not be traced: this one was sentenced to transportation for life. One dacoity (in Nangla, district Jessore) ended up in a conspiracy case, in which fourteen persons were transported for various terms between three

and seven years. They were prosecuted for conspiring to wage war against the king.

In 1910 there were two conspiracy trials in which 90 persons were charged with waging war against the king. One is known as the Howrah Conspiracy Case and the other as the Dacca Conspiracy case. In the former fifty persons were arrested, but six having been separately convicted for dacoities, the conspiracy case was launched against the remaining 44. In the course of the trial seven persons were further dropped out. The proceedings continued for a long time, but ultimately only six were convicted, the court holding the evidence of the two approvers unreliable.

In the Dacca Conspiracy Case 44 persons were committed to the sessions. Pulin Behari Das was the leader of this group. They belonged to the Dacca Anusilan Society and were bound to secrecy by two vows. In one the members undertook never to separate themselves from the Samiti, to be loyal to its interests, to keep their own character immaculate, to carry out the orders of the authorities without question, to be diligent in gymnastics and drill, to keep secret from all non-members the art of self-defence, and to work for the welfare of the country and gradually of the world. In the other, a declaration was made that no internal matters were to be divulged to anyone. Justice Mukharji, one of the trying judges, said in his judgment: 'The member who took his final vow undertook to carry out unquestioningly the orders of the parichalak or the head of the samiti to keep him informed of his own whereabouts wherever he might be, to inform the chief of the existence of conspiracies against the samiti and under his orders to remedy them, to return to duty whenever the president might command, to consider no kind of work as humiliating, to cultivate self-abnegation and self-sacrifice and to keep secret from all persons not equally bound by oath the instructions that he had received.' The members 'were not even to write letters to their friends and relations without the permission of the leader, and all letters for and from the members were to be shown to him. Members were also to cut themselves off completely from their relations and friends, and if they obtained any money from them, it was to be regarded as the common property of the

samiti.' The vows were taken in the presence of the goddess Kali.

The wording of the special vow was: 'In the presence of God, fire, mother, preceptor and the leader (making them witnesses) I swear that I will do all the work of the circle staking my life. If I fail to keep this vow, may the curse of Brahmans, of the mother, and of the great patriots of every country speedily destroy me.'

The samiti had a well-organized office with registers of members, in which were entered their antecedents. The provincial organization had under it district committees, town committees, rural committees. There was a set of rules which guided the conduct of the members and the samiti. Disobedience was to be punished with death. This rule was, it was said, enforced in several cases. The samiti's inspectors prepared 'village notes' for which forms were printed. The form contained 21 points on which information was to be obtained. It had also a table in print with spaces for the entry of information under various heads. A map was 'to be attached to each village note to indicate the roads and rivers, meadows and canals, houses and gardens, and the specimens on the record'. The object was to divide the whole of Bengal into divisions and sub-divisions and to have branch associations at every place of any note or importance. Money was to be raised for financing the Revolution, but the rules did not favour dacoities. Rule 10 said: 'Money collection is prohibited by violent methods.' Subscription, according to rule 11, was to be the chief source of income. Russian revolutionary methods were studied and adopted. The samiti had a cipher code for secret documents.

In this conspiracy case fifteen persons were sentenced to different terms of rigorous imprisonment, from two to seven years.

In spite of the long-drawn out trials, victimisation in jails, and harsh terms of imprisonment, the revolutionary activities did not abate. In 1911 there were 19 terrorist cases. On January 21 some students and teachers of the Sonarang National School (in Dacca district) seized a postal peon's bag which contained cash. Fourteen persons were arrested, and seven of them were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and

fine. On July 11 three police informers were murdered at Sonarang; one of them had assisted the police in the investigation of the postal peon case. The Sonarang school was founded in 1908 under the national education scheme of the extremists (in the Congress), and was different from others in that its curriculum included physical exercise, lathi play and teaching of carpentry and iron work. Of the other five persons shot dead during 1911, three were policemen engaged in making political inquiries, one was a prosecution witness and the fifth the Collector of Tinnervelly, named Ashe. In one case a bomb was thrown on the car of a European, named Cowley, by a boy aged 16. The bomb, which did not explode, was in fact meant for Denham, a prominent officer of the Criminal Investigation Department at Calcutta.

The year 1912 also contributed its own crop of revolutionary activities. In one case of arms recovery, the person (Girindra Mohan Das) arrested was the son of a magistrate. A collection of revolutionary stores, arms and documents in a box was seized from the possession of Das. He was sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment. On December 13 an attempt was made on the life of a police informer. 'A powerful picric acid bomb of the type manufactured in Chandranagar and distributed by revolutionaries in various parts of India was exploded against the walls of the room in which he ordinarily slept. A hole was blown through the wall, but the man escaped.' In the same month as Viceroy Hardinge was making his state entry into Delhi, the new capital, a bomb was thrown which wounded him seriously and killed one of his attendants. The bomb-thrower could not be discovered. Later it was stated that the man was Rash Behari Bose.

On September 29, 1913 a head constable, Haripada Deb, was shot dead by three young men on the edge of the lake in College Square, Calcutta. His assailant disappered into the crowd; no arrest was made and no evidence was forthcoming. Deb had acquired knowledge of a revolutionary section and was therefore put out of the way. Next evening a police inspector was killed in Mymensingh by a bomb. He had played a prominent part in the investigation about the Dacca Samiti. A bomb was thrown into a police station at Raniganj, but it

failed to explode. An attempt was made to assassinate an Indian Civil Service officer, Gordon; but the man carrying the bomb himself fell dead when suddenly it exploded.

In the year 1913 there were two important trials: the Barisal Conspiracy Case and the Barisal Conspiracy Supplementary Case. Thirty-seven persons were arrested and put up for conspiring to wage war against the King and for committing dacoities. Most of them belonged to the Barisal Anusilan Samiti, a branch of the Dacca Samiti. It had its own elaborate organization. It had a district organization scheme whose object was to have branches in all districts of East Bengal. 'The organizations were systematic and complete. The "idea" (as it was called) was to be zealously preached amongst students and school boys. The members were gradually initiated into the inner circle by vows. There were several departments like the Arms Department, the Action Department, the General Department, etc.' The district organization scheme provided for 'spreading of the propaganda among school boys by the introduction of masters imbued with the "idea" into schools all over the country and by the institution of selected students in all schools.' The accused in the Barisal cases were all young men, their ages ranging from 19 to 29. The sentences awarded to 12 of them varied from two to twelve years.

In November 1913 a raid made by the police on a house in Raja Bazar, Calcutta, led to the discovery of 'revolutionary literature and cigarette tins, the latter in the process of being turned into bombs.' Four persons found asleep in the house were arrested; later another two were arrested from two different places. The literature found in the house advocated the 'realization of independence of India with the aid of heroic patriots by bloodshed and assassination'. The men were, as usual, prosecuted and jailed.

In August 1914 a clerk of a Calcutta firm of gun-makers, Roda & Co., disappeared with ten cases containting fifty Mauser pistols and 45,000 rounds of Mauser ammunition. These were distributed to different revolutionary groups, and the police later found that in 54 cases of dacoity and murder after August, Mauser pistols were used. In June a police informer was shot down in a public street in Chittagong. Next

month another informer was murdered in Dacca city. An intelligence inspector was shot dead by a few young men at the junction of three crowded streets, while he was alighting from a tram car. The men were pursued by some members of the police force who were standing close by. One of the pursuers was fired on and killed.

Another notable case of violence in the year was the throwing of two bombs, one into the house of a deputy superintendent of police and the other outside it. The deputy superintendent escaped, but the explosion killed a head constable and wounded two constables and a relative of the deputy superintendent. The attempt on his life continued, and he was killed in broad day light in 1916.

In 1915, 1916 and 1917 dacoities and murders of policemen largely increased. Dozens of revolutionaries were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment or hanged. They had their own code of morals and scruples. Here is an example. A letter written on a printed letterhead bearing the title 'Bengal Branch of Independent Kingdom of United India' was addressed to a banker, from whom Rs. 9,891 and some ornaments had been seized. The seizure was found, according to the information of the Bengal branch's spies, containing two pledged ornaments. The banker was therefore informed that these would be returned to him because the rules of the branch forbade seizure of pledged articles.

In Madras the first murder was committed on June 17, 1911 when the district magistrate of Tinnevelly was shot by Vanchi Aiyar in a railway carriage. This murder led to the launching of a conspiracy case in which nine persons were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The assassin was hanged. Before the deed was done, preparations had been afoot for organizing a revolutoinary movement in the presidency. Seditious literature was printed and distributed. Nilakantha Brahmachari and Shankar Krishna Aiyar had been going round, 'preaching swadeshi and sedition and inducing various persons in the presidency to take a blood oath of association for the purpose of obtaining swaraj'. The movement was gaining momentum with every passing day and was being joined by scores of young men. The murder alerted the provincial

Government, who succeeded in breaking it up.

In U.P. the beginning was made in 1908 with the opening of a club, called the Anusilan Samiti, at Benares by Sachindra Nath Sanyal. The club remained unnoticed and ineffective until 1914, when Rash Behari Bose arrived in Benares and took charge of the movement in U.P. He was wanted by police and a reward had been offered for his arrest. His photograph had been widely circulated, but he managed to live in Benares dodging the police throughout the greater part of 1914. The club, under his leadership, became very active. Bombs were prepared; but a substantial supply of them was obtained from Bengal and despatched through special messengers to different places in U. P. and Madhya Pradesh. Bose's plan was frustrated when a Maratha youth, Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, his close associate, was arrested at Meerut where he had gone with a supply of bombs. He was apprehended in the lines of the 12th Indian Cavalry with a box containing ten bombs, 'sufficient', to quote an official report, 'to annihilate half a regiment'. (Pingley was afterwards convicted for participation in the Lahore Conspiracy case and hanged). The discovery by the authorities of Benares being the nucleus of revolutionary work in U. P., Madhya Pradesh and the Punjab, threw the whole police force of the three provinces into a state of emergency. In U. P.'s first trial, known as the Benares Conspiracy Case, ten persons were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; Sachindra Nath Sanyal was transported for life. Shortly after the case was over, Harnam Singh, once a havaldar in the 9th Bhopal Infantry was sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment for distributing revolutionary pamphlets.

In Punjab, which was quiet until 1913, the bomb first appeared on May 17. It was placed on a road in the Lawrence Gardens at Lahore with the intention of killing or injuring some Europeans. The attempt miscarried, and an Indian orderly, who ran over the bomb on his bicycle, was killed. This and other clues led to a prolonged trial of a number of persons of whom four (Amir Chand, Avadh Bihari, Balmukund and Basant Kumar Biswas) were hanged.

In Madhya Pradesh the rebellion project did not make any headway and came to an end with the arrest and conviction of

Nalini Mohan Mukherji in the Benares Conspiracy Case; he had been deputed by Bose to take charge of Madhya Pradesh and organize a movement. He did not succeed, nor did the others who made some effort after his arrest.

Let us now turn to the revolutionary activities in foreign countries and their repercussions in India. There were in the United States and Canada about 15,090 Indians, mostly Sikhs, before the war of 1914-18 began; they had gone there in search of better luck and established themselves in various vocations. Nationals of an unfree country, they were discriminated against in the social life of the USA; and they began to realize that the key to self-respect lay in India's liberation. The man who mobilised Indians there into a team of revolutionary workers was Har Dayal.

Har Dayal was a resident of Delhi. After a course of study at the Punjab University, he proceeded to England in 1905 to complete his education at Oxford, holding a state scholarship. There his ideas underwent a change, and, to be honest to himself, he surrendered the scholarship, stating that he disapproved of the English system of education. In 1908 he returned to India and held a class in Lahore for preaching the bringing to an end of the British Government in India by a general boycott combined with passive resistance. In 1911 he went to San Francisco, where he applied himself to the task of educating Indians in the ideology of revolt. He addressed meetings and organized associations sworn to destroy British rule. In November 1913 Indians from various parts of America met in a conference at San Francisco, collected fifteen thousand dollars and established the Indian Association. The Association decided to publish a journal, named the *Ghadar* (Revolt) in Hindi, Urdu, Marathi and Gurmukhi to commemorate the Revolt of 1857. Later the Association was itself named after the journal —the Ghadar Party. The Association grew quickly, the membership rising to 5,000 and the branches in the USA and Canada to 62. The Ghadar spirit travelled to the Far East also, and a branch of the party was formed in Japan by Barkatullah, at Shanghai by Mathura Singh, and in Hong Kong by Bhagwan Singh. Indians in Malaya, Japan, China, the Philippines, Fiji, Argentine, etc. began to subscribe to the *Ghadar*.

At a meeting held at Sacramento on December 31, 1913, Har Dayal revealed that Germany was preparing to go to war with England and that it was time to get ready to return to India for the coming revolution. On March 16, 1914 the United States authorities arrested him to deport him to India. But he secured his release on bail and managed to escape to Switzerland.

The doctrine which Har Dayal preached had reached the Sikhs and other Indian residents in British Columbia. At a meeting in Vancouver in December 1913, a poem from the *Ghadar* was read out in which the Indians were urged to expel the British from India. British Columbia, to many in the Punjab, seemed a land of promise with its high wages. But it was not easy for Indians to secure permission to settle there. One Gurdat Singh who carried on business in the Far East made a determination to defy the restriction placed on Indians and sailed from Hong Kong on April 4, 1914 with 351 Sikhs and 21 Mohammedans in a Japanese ship, *Comagata Maru*, reaching Vancouver on May 23, 1914. It was a deliberate defiance of the Canadian law which prohibited entry of Asians unless they possessed passports from the Government of their own country and a certain minimum amount of money. There was a tussle between the Canadian authorities and the Indian party, the former refusing to allow landing and the latter ignoring the order and insisting on landing. A body of police was then sent to enforce the order, but with the help of firearms the police were beaten back by Gurdat Singh and his men. The ship was then driven away by an armed force, very few being allowed to land. The incident greatly aggravated their tempers, and they sailed for India full of revolutionary thoughts.

Being posted with the development, the Government of India forearmed themselves by promulgating the Ingress Ordinance designed to 'control the movements of the returning emigrants of Ghadar persuasion'. When the vessel arrived at the mouth of the Hooghly river on September 27, 1914 and was moored at Budge-Budge on the 29th, the passengers were asked by the authorities to move into a train which was waiting to convey them to the Punjab free of charge. They refused to avail them-

selves of the offer and tried to march on Calcutta in protest. They were forcibly turned back, and this was a signal for them to retaliate. There was street-fighting in which eighteen Sikhs were killed; many were arrested on the spot, and some were hunted down and arrested subsequently.

An account of the Calcutta rioting was widely circulated by the revolutionaries in foreign countries, and the Indians were told to return to India where a revolt was about to begin. The call was responded to by 8,000 people sailing for the homeland. Again, the Government of India had enough time to meet the coming trouble. A careful watch was kept on all immigrants, 400 of those who had responded to the call were taken into custody and detained in jail; 2,500 were interned in their villages.

Yet another ship, *Tosa Maru*, arrived at Calcutta on October 29, 1914 with 173 Indians, mostly Sikhs, collected from Manila, Shanghai, Hong Kong and some other places. The Government of India had already been advised by its own sources that the 'passengers had talked openly of starting rebellion on arriving in India'. Immediately on landing, one hundred persons were interned in jails. The rest reached the Punjab and joined their *Komagata Maru* comrades in kindling the revolution, for which a date in the third week of February 1915 had been fixed and widely notified. There was no revolt; everything being so open, Government succeeded in suppressing the entire chain of preparations. How the two parties—revolutionaries and Government—acted and reacted is described below.

In December 1914 Pingley of Poona (already referred to), who had returned from America with some Sikh revolutionaries, arrived in the Punjab. He discussed with his comrades there the items of work which should be put in hand at once—seduction of Indian troops, collection of arms, preparation of bombs, plundering of Government treasuries, and dacoities for financing the revolution. Emissaries were sent round to collect material for making bombs. Rash Behari Bose, who had also reached Amritsar and lived there till the beginning of February, was guiding the preparations. Some young men were despatched to various cantonments in upper India to procure military aid

for the appointed day. Gangs of villagers were organized to take part in the revolution. 'Bombs were prepared; arms were got together; flags were made ready; a declaration of war was drawn up; instruments were collected for destroying railways and telegraph wires.'

But just when everything was ready for explosion, a spy gave the Government detailed information of the preparations. On February 18, Government posted British troops in all principal towns of the Punjab to the surprise of the people who did not know that a revolt had been planned. Six thousand Nepalese troops were deployed over the affected area, and simultaneously arrests on mass scale were made all over the Punjab. Dhananjay Keer, a biographer of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, sums up the result thus: 'Some five thousand men were put on trial for treason in the Punjab alone. Five hundred were tried by court-martial and executed, eight hundred were sentenced to transportation for life, ten thousand were interned without trial, and a large number had to remain underground for a year. Government transported about 500 revolutionaries to the Andamans. Prominent among them was Bhai Parmanand.'

From the literature seized by the authorities, it was concluded that the revolutionaries had designed simultaneous outbreaks at Lahore, Ferozepore and Rawalpindi and later their operations were intended to cover a far wider area which included distant places like Benares and Jubbulpur.

Some sporadic attempts, however, continued even after the plan of the rising had been frustrated. On February 19, 40 men arrived by train in Ferozepore; some were armed 'presumably to attack magazines and armed depots'. They did not succeed, the spy information having already alerted the authorities. In March, three immigrants were arrested while attempting to persuade the troops to revolt. Six bombs were seized in Ludhiana. And there were cases of murders, docoities, distribution of revolutionary literature in different places.

After the round-up, nine batches of revolutionaries were put up for trial by special tribunals constituted under the Defence of India Act, a sweeping law enacted during the war to deal with emergencies. These trials were called the Lahore Conspi-

racy Case trials. In one case 61 persons were charged with waging war against the King, in the second 74, and in the third 12. They were great trials in which 855 prosecution and 1,314 defence witnesses were examined. Severest punishments were awarded; only 29 of the accused were acquitted. Twenty-eight were hanged and the rest were sentenced to transportation for life or long terms of imprisonment. The first Tribunal observed that 'a wave of sedition had been ebbing and flowing in the Punjab since 1907'. It was revealed at the trial that Indian soldiers were contacted at Meerut, Kanpur, Allahabad, Benares, Faizabad, Lucknow, and a few other places.

The evidence in the third case revealed that certain revolutionaries had assembled at Bangkok and planned to invade India by way of Burma. The Tribunal said: 'We have clear evidence that this design did exist and that it was part and parcel of the Ghadar movement in which German agents were concerned.... It is quite clear that some scheme for causing trouble to the British Government, to be developed in Siam, had been hatched by the leader of the Ghadar movement in San Francisco in conjunction with Germans.'

About the complicity of Germans, the Tribunal observed: 'We have seen that the "Jugantar Ashram" (at San Francisco) was placarded with a sheet: "Do not fight the Germans, they are our friends." And this was clearly the Ghadar motto after the war. We have seen that the literature printed at the Ghadar offices was taken away personally by the German Consul for distribution among Indians everywhere; we have seen that Germany paid for Indian agents to be sent to Afghanistan, Siam, Manila, Tibet and Turkey from America, to stir up trouble against Britain; that the German Consul in San Francisco was in close connection with Ram Chandra; and that the Consul-General in New York was forwarding Indian revolutionaries at his own expense to Germany to help in such ways as they could.'

Har Dayal, after his disappearance from America, had started an Indian Revolutionary Society in Berlin; its aim was to establish a republic in India. It held constant meetings attended by Turks, Egyptians and Germans. The Society had an Oriental Bureau for disseminating revolutionary literature

to Indian prisoners of war in Germany. In the East, a Ghadar Association of the Pacific Coast with local branches was formed. In Constantinople, a paper, *Jahan-i-Islam*, was started about May 1914. It contained articles in Arabic, Turkish, Urdu and Hindi. Its Urdu portion was prepared by Abu Saiyed of the Punjab. It instigated Indians to kill Englishmen who numbered after all only two lakhs in India. Copies of *Jahan-i-Islam* were freely obtainable in Lahore and Calcutta.

This part of the movement abroad had no small connection with Turkey, being one of the powers arrayed against the British. As part of its anti-British strategy, Turkey had in 1913 appointed an Indian Muslim its Consul in Rangoon; he was at that time a member of the trading community there. There were a number of pro-Turkey Muslims in India, and in the last week of December 1914 a Gujarati Muslim, Kasim Mansur, sent a letter to his son in Rangoon, enclosing with it an appeal from the Malaya States Guides—one of the regiments in Singapore—to the Turkish Consul Daud. The contents of the appeal were to the effect that the regiment was prepared to mutiny, the intention obviously being to paralyse British war effort in that part of the Empire. The letter was intercepted by the British authorities and the Malaya States Guides was transferred to another place.

Yet a mutiny did take place in the 5th Light Infantry of Singapore, if not in Malay States Guides. The 5th Light Infantry consisted wholly of Muslims, largely drawn from India, and was to leave for Hong Kong, and a transport was standing by to embark them. 'As the battalion's ammunition was being loaded into lorries at the Alexandra Barracks, a shot was fired. An outbreak immediately followed. Those who showed signs of loyalty were shot down. The mutineers broke up into three parties; each was assigned an important job. There were at that time 300 German sailors and civilians interned there. One party was to overpower the sentries guarding the German internment camp and release the prisoners; the second was to attack the house of the Colonel of the 5th Infantry, and the third to prevent any assistance arriving down the road from Singapore. Lieut. Montgomerie, the Commandant of the Internment Camp, was shot dead. A

terrible massacre then followed. A number of British officers and a few Germans were killed. The mutineers then proceeded to murder Europeans wherever they found them. They first met a motor car which they ordered to stop. As it did not stop, they shot dead the occupants, the district judge and a British business man. In this way a number of cars were stopped and their European occupants murdered. Later on the New Bridge Road, they stopped a car with five occupants. They killed two Englishmen and left a third for dead, shot dead the Indian chauffeur but spared a lady of the party. They next ran into a doctor and his wife, shot him, but again spared his wife. Another detached group met three Europeans and killed them all. Then they passed a bungalow in which three Englishmen sat smoking in the verandah. These too they murdered.'

The mutineers were for three days masters of the place. On the fourth day, new regiments arrived and reoccupied the whole of Tanglin, Alexanrda Barracks and Normanton. Two of the leaders of the mutineers were hanged, thirty-eight were shot dead, all in public. Some 300 mutineers escaped into the jungle.

Another regiment which narrowly escaped mutiny was the 13th Baluchis of Bombay. In November 1914 some of its soldiers killed one of their officers; as a punishment the entire regiment was transferred from Bombay to Rangoon. There it got its full feed of revolutionary tenets through the Ghadar newspapers, and by January 1915 it was thoroughly disaffected and ready for mutiny. The news leaked, and drastic action nipped the project in the bud. Two hundred men of the 13th Baluchis were court-martialled.

Another project was similarly frustrated. Two Indian Muslims, Ali Ahmed Siddiqi and Hakim Faim Ali, had gone from India to Turkey as members of the Red Crescent Society to afford medical relief to the Turkish army in the Balkan war. They went to Rangoon after Turkey's entry into the world war and applied themselves to organizing a secret revolutionary society, whose object was to subvert British rule. They collected money and arms. A little while later two members of the Ghadar Party, Hasan Khan and Sohan Lal Pathak (the

latter being an emissary from San Francisco), came from Bangkok on the same mission and established contact with the secret society of Ali Ahmad Siddiqi and Hakim Faim Ali. A concerted effort was made to bring about mutiny in the military police of Burma consisting of 15,000 men. Pathak 'met some men of the Mountain Battery stationed at Maymyo and harangued them on the folly of serving Government.' He carried with him a copy of the *Jahan-i-Islam*, several copies of a fatwa (Muslim Divines' religious commandment) appealing to the faithful to destroy unbelievers, a copy of the *Ghadar* paper, elaborate formulas for making explosives, three automatic pistols, and 270 cartridges. But he happened to fall into the hands of a loyalist, who captured and delivered him to the authorities. Five days later his associate Narayan Singh was arrested at Maymyo with similar material in his possession. The whole plot was then unearthed and frustrated.

Yet another revolutionary society of Rangoon, the Muslim Ghadar Party, planned a rising on the occasion of the Muslim festival of Bakr-i-Id in October 1915; Englishmen were to be killed instead of goats and cows. Official vigilance did not allow the plan to materialise. It was now obvious that the revolutionaries had no chance of success in Rangoon; the entire 'city was honey-combed with a net-work of official intelligence. During November a Ghadar plot in the military police battalion at Pyawhwe was discovered, and revolvers, dynamite and other things to be used in the mutiny were seized.' The special tribunal, appointed to try persons arrested in connection with the conspiracies, observed that 'there can be no doubt that a conspiracy was started in 1912 and that it had for its object the freedom of India from the British Raj by mutiny, whereby the English were to be driven out of India and the country governed by the people themselves.'

An attempt was made, on the north-west frontier of India, to revive the Wahabi cult of rebellion. In February 1915 fifteen Lahore students left their college and joined the Mujahidin, Indian rebels, residing in the frontier colony. Thence they went to Kabul, where they were placed under detention. They were afterwards released and allowed some freedom of movement under surveillance. Three of them were captured

by the Russians and made over to the British authorities.

Some months later another party made the North-West Frontier its concern. The party was headed by Obeidulla, a converted Sikh, who was trained as a Maulvi in the Muslim religious school at Deoband in Saharanpur district of U. P. He had started a school in Delhi and put two books into circulation preaching militant activities to Indian Muslims and impressing on them the supreme duty of jihad. In August he crossed the North-West Frontier with three companions, Abdulla, Fateh Mohammed and Mohammed Ali, and proceeded to Kabul, where they met members of a Turko-German mission. A month later two other associates of Obeidulla—Mohammed Mian Ansari and Mahmud Hassan—both belonging to the Deoband school, also left India; but instead of going across the Frontier, they proceeded to Hedjaz. In 1916 Ansari returned with a declaration of jihad from the hand of Ghalib Pasha, the then Turkish Military Governor of the Hedjaz. While on his way Ansari distributed copies of this document, known as the Ghalibnama, both in India and among the frontier tribes. He then joined Obeidulla in Kabul.

Kabul became in a few months the rendezvous of some leading rebels. It was here that a provisional government of India was set up to take charge of the administration in the event of the British being thrown out. Raja Mahendra Pratap was nominated president of the provisional government and Barkatulla its Prime Minister. Mahendra Pratap had left India at the end of 1914 for Geneva where he met Har Dayal, who introduced him to the German Consul. Barkatulla had for some time been professor of Hindustani in Tokyo and also editing an anti-British paper, the *Islamic Fraternity*, which was suppressed by the Japanese authorities. He was dismissed from service also. He went to America, where he became a member of the American Ghadar Party. He was one of the close associates of Shyamji Krishna Varma.

The provisional government of India began really to behave as such and 'despatched letters to the Governor of Russian Turkestan and then to the Czar inviting Russia to throw over her alliance with Great Britain and assist in the overthrow of British rule in India.' The letters never reached the addressee

—they fell into British hands. The party constituting the provisional government remained on the whole ineffective.

In March 1915 Jitendra Nath Lahiri arrived in Bombay from Europe and brought offers of German help. He went to Calcutta and conveyed the news to Bengal revolutionaries and invited them to send an agent to Batavia to discuss certain plans with the Germans there. He met with ready response, and in April the Bengal party despatched Narendra Bhattacharji, under the pseudonym of C. Martin, to Batavia. He reached Batavia safely and was introduced by the German Consul to one Theodore Helfferich who said that a cargo of arms and ammunition had been sent to Karachi in the ship *Maverick*. Lahiri did not approve of the destination, and suggested that the ship should be diverted to Bengal. The German Consul agreed to the suggestion, and Lahiri's wish was granted. 'The cargo was said to consist of 30,000 rifles with 400 rounds of ammunition and two lakhs of rupees.' Lahiri returned to India in the middle of June to make arrangements to receive the cargo.

It was decided to divide the arms into three parts, to be sent to (1) Hatia, for East Bengal, (2) Calcutta, and (3) Balasore. The details of the projected revolt were then worked out. The revolutionaries 'considered that they were numerically strong enough to deal with the troops in Bengal, but they feared reinforcement from outside.' Therefore 'they decided to hold up the three main railways into Bengal by blowing up the principal bridges.' Jatindra Mukharji, Bholanath Chattarji, and Satish Chakrabarti were deputed for the work. Narendra Chaudhuri and Phanindra Chakrabarti were told to go to Hatia to obtain control of the East Bengal districts and then to march on to Calcutta. The Calcutta party, under Naren Bhattacharji and Bepin Ganguli, were first to take possession of all the arms and arsenals around Calcutta. The German officers arriving in the *Maverick* were to stay in East Bengal and raise and train armies.

We now come to the end of the story; it was a disappointing end. The *Maverick* did not contain any arms when she left but was, according to the plan, to take them from a schooner called the *Annie Larsen;* the schooner had a cargo of arms

and ammunition purchased by a German, named Tauscher, in, New York. The *Maverick* was an old oil tank steamer purchased by a German firm of San Francisco. She sailed on or about April 22, 1915 from San Pedro in California without a cargo. She had a crew of 25 officers and men, all Indians. Among them was a Punjabi, Hari Singh, who had quantities of Ghadar literature in trunks. The *Maverick* went first to San Jose del Cabo in Lower California and obtained clearance for Java. She then sailed for the Island of Socorro, 600 miles west of Mexico, to meet the schooner *Annie Larsen.* But a meeting was never effected. How could the schooner ever reach the destination? The information about her intentions having been already in possession of the American authorities, her cargo was seized when she arrived at Hoquiam in the territory of Washington. Thus ended the first German attempt to send arms to India.

More attempts followed to meet the same fate. The German Consul-General at Shanghai arranged to send four ships with arms to the Bay of Bengal. The first was to carry 20,000 rifles, 8,000,000 cartridges 2,000 pistols and hand grenades and explosives, and two lakh rupees. The second was to carry 10,000 rifles, a million cartridges and grenades and explosives. The third was to raid Port Blair, pick up revolutionary prisoners and the men of the mutinous Singapore regiment and then to raid Rangoon. But the men who had gone from India to Shanghai and other places to arrange for the sailing of the ships were all arrested on the way, and the plan did not materialise. In October 1915 the German Consul made yet another effort. On his instruction, a German, named Nielsen, engaged two Chinese to take to Calcutta 129 pistols and 20,830 rounds of ammunition concealed in the centre of bundles of planks. Both the Chinese were arrested by the Shanghai municipal police.

The Indian revolutionaries could never produce an all-India organization and their activities here and there did not cause any harm to the physical existence of the British Empire. But this is not the proper criterion to evaluate the effect they produced. The British, who entered the war of 1914-18 as defenders of democracy, were exposed as its enemies in India. Everywhere the civilized world was told that Indians were re-

sisting the British power in the same way as the war victims in other countries were resisting the invaders. In all those countries where the revolutionaries had their centres of activities, the people were reminded of India's ancient civilization, her culture and literary attainments. Through widely-circulated literature, attention was invited to the wisdom to be found in Sanskrit literature, particularly in the works of Kalidas. Never before was it announced more eloquently in dozens of foreign countries that Britain held in India an unwilling people under a force of occupation. Never before was the world told in such ringing terms that the so-called loyalty of Indians to the British Crown was a false claim. Never before did the British themselves believe that so many Indians would rise to take up arms against them. The whole phenomenon was an eye-opener. It gave birth to a spirit which was bound to intensify more and more should the British continue to give indication of holding on to power. That they would never have peace of mind in India was abundantly clear; that if they did not take a decision to part with power sooner or later, the murderous attacks on their officers might continue. They no doubt frustrated a large number of conspiracies; but the magnitude and dangerous consequences the conspiracies aimed at brought the rulers face to face with grim realities.

13

Home Rule Movement

The attitude in the Congress organization was strikingly different from that in the revolutionary camp. On the eve of the declaration of war by Britain some Congress leaders happened to be in London, being members of a deputation which was to make certain prayers in connection with the future instalment of reforms. The very first thing they did was to pledge loyalty of India 'to the British throne in the face of external foe'. They said that 'the people of India would readily and willingly co-operate to the best of their ability and afford opportunity of securing that end by placing their resources at His Majesty's disposal.' Gandhi, the hero of many a battle in South Africa, who arrived in London about the same time, chose the same attitude. He and some others addressed a letter to the Under-Secretary of State for India, in which they said: 'It was thought desirable by many of us during the crisis that has overtaken the Empire that whilst many Englishmen, leaving their ordinary vocation in life, are responding to the Imperial call, those Indians who are residing in the United Kingdom and who can at all do so should place themselves unconditionally at the disposal of the authorities. On behalf of ourselves and those whose names appear on the list appended hereto, we beg to offer our services to the authorities. We venture to trust that the Right Hon'ble *Marquess* of Crewe* will approve of our offer.... We would respectfully emphasize the fact that the one dominant idea guiding us is that of rendering such humble assistance as we may be considered capable of performing, as an earnest of our desire to share the responsibilities of member-

* The Secretary of State for India

ship of this great Empire if we would share its privileges.' (What the Indians residing in Europe, America and other foreign countries actually did has already been told in the last chapter.)

Scenes of profound loyalty were enacted at the 1914 Congress also. After many years a Crown representative, the Governor of Madras, attended the session and participated in the proceedings. As he entered the pavilion the congregation stood up to greet him. A resolution expressing loyalty of the Congress to the Throne was moved—it had been previously arranged that the tabling of the resolution should synchronise with the arrival of the Governor. The resolution also made a demand: 'In view of the profound and avowed loyalty of the people of India, as manifested in the present crisis, this Congress appeals to the Government to perpetuate it and make it an enduring and valuable asset of the Empire by removing invidious distinction between His Majesty's Indian and other subjects, by redeeming the pledges contained in the despatch of August 25, 1911, and by taking such measures as may be necessary for the recognition of India as a component part of a federal Empire in the full and free enjoyment of all the rights belonging to the people.'

The speeches made at the session showed once again that the Congress leaders' vision was yet quite foreshortened and their ambition quite small, and that they would be satisfied with Indians getting more posts in the civil service and commissions in the army. The president of the session, Bhupindernath Basu, complained in his presidential address that there were yet only 70 Indians in the civil service cadre of 1,400. He said that Indians should have 'the right to carry arms, the right to bear commissions in the army, and the right to form volunteer corps in defence of their hearth and home.' The president of the next year's Congress, Sir Satyendra Prasanna Sinha—he was the first Indian to become a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council—exposed the leaders' mind more thoroughly. He began his address with a pledge of loyalty: 'My first duty today is again to lay at the feet of our august and beloved sovereign our unswerving fealty, our unshaken allegiance and our enthusiastic homage.' Then he expressed himself in agreement

with Lincoln's dictum—'government of the people, for the people, and by the people'. And lest he should be misunderstood, he hastened to say: 'Even if the English nation were willing to make us an immediate free gift of full self-government—and those who differ most from the Congress are the first to deny the existence of such willingness—I take leave to doubt whether the boon would be worth having as such, for it is a commonplace of politics that nations like individuals must grow into freedom, and nothing is so baneful in political institutions as prematurity; nor must we forget that India free can never be ancient India restored.'

The Congress, however, went a little farther than the limit Sinha, if left to himself, would have fixed. The resolution it adopted affirmed that the time had arrived to 'introduce a substantial measure of reform towards the attainment of self-government by liberalising the system of government so as to secure to the people themselves an effective control over it by the introduction of provincial autonomy including financial independence, the expansion of legislative councils so as to make them truly and adequately representative of all sections of the people, and to give them effective control over the acts of the executive government.' The resolution also demands 'reconstruction of the various existing executive councils and the establishment of similar councils in provinces where they did not exist, the reform or abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, and a liberal measure of local self-government.' (The scheme formulated by the Congress and the Muslim League has already been discussed in a previous chapter.) The resolution adopted at the Congress of 1916 did not want self-government to be conferred at once. It said: 'His Majesty the King Emperor should be pleased to issue a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of British policy to confer self-government on India at an early date.' At that session also the Governor of the province (U.P.) was present; the president accorded him a formal welcome, to which he made reply in a brief speech.

Also present at the session was Tilak, attending the Congress after eight years; there was no lack of definite indication that the days of abject loyalty would soon come to an end. Tilak

was released in June 1914 but was prevented by the moderates from re-entering the Congress. The entire moderate leadership, headed by Gokhale, was arrayed against him and his extremist followers. Successfully opposing the proposal to let Tilak return to the Congress, Gokhale had expressed himself thus in his letter to the president-designate: 'Mr. Tilak told Mr. Subba Rao frankly and in unequivocal terms that though he accepts the position laid down in what is known as the Congress creed, viz., that the aim of the Congress is the attainment by India of self-government within the Empire by constitutional means, he does not believe in the present methods of the Congress, which rest on association with the Government where possible and opposition to it where necessary. In place of these he wants to substitute the method of opposition to Government pure and simple within the constitutional limits—in other words a policy of Irish obstruction.... Mr. Tilak wants to address only one demand to the Government here and to the British public in England viz., for the concession of self-government to India, and till that is conceded he would urge his countrymen to have nothing to do with either the public services or the Legislative Councils and local and municipal bodies. And by organizing obstruction to government in every possible direction within the limits of the laws of the land, he hopes to be able to bring the administration to a standstill and compel the authorities to capitulate. This is briefly his programme, and he says that he wants to work for its realization through the Congress if he and his followers are enabled to rejoin it, or failing this by starting a new organization to be called the National League.'

The Congress would not be allowed to remain a 'pocket borough' of Government; that was the task to which Tilak resolved to apply himself. After he was spirited away in 1908, the moderates had banged the door of the Congress against the extremists. The constitution was so amended that only the public bodies under the control of the moderates could elect delegates to annual sessions. Tilak now demanded that the Congress should again become as broad-based as it was until 1907 and that restrictions on election of delegates placed subsequently should be removed. But the moderates were deter-

mined not to give any quarter to the extremists. Another moderate stalwart, Pherozeshah Mehta, who had firmly put his foot down against them, was bitterly inimical to Tilak. The only person in the front-rank leadership eager for the return of the extremists was Mrs. Annie Besant. A philanthropist and wife of an English clergyman, Mrs. Besant, when quite young, had started independently as a keen radical and atheistical pamphleteer and speaker. For years she had worked with Charles Bradlaugh and gradually gravitated to socialism. Later she was attracted to theosophy which she learnt from Madame Blavatsky, a Russian. She arrived in India in 1893 to work for the Theosophical Society of which she became president in 1907. During her first visit in 1893 she travelled 6,000 miles into many parts of the country. She was attracted to Hindu scriptures, and the revival of the ancient Indian glory became a passion with her. Up to 1914 she devoted herself exclusively to religious, social and educational activities. In the spring of that year she turned to politics and started with the help of her fellow workers a weekly review, the *Commonweal.* Later (in the same year), she brought out a daily paper, the *New India.* As she herself stated, 'round this and the weekly *Commonweal* was destined to range the battle for Home Rule'. Her activities during 1915 and the weakening of the moderates' citadel on account of the death of Gokhale and Mehta paved the way for the return of the extremists to the Congress.

But the annual session was yet far away, and the extremists were naturally eager to start an activity that could promote the country's interests and give them satisfaction. A platform seemed in sight: it was the annual session of the Presidency's political conference fixed for April 20, at Poona. The election of Tilak at a public meeting as a member of the reception committee opened the way for the extremists to participate in the conference. Though the moderates, speaking on behalf of the Congress, refused to recognize the conference (because of the association of the extremists with it), the session went on. The general feeling, perhaps born of fear, that dominated the country was reflected in the conference pavilion also: nothing should be said in speeches that might embarrass Government during the war. But Tilak would not let the opportunity of

an assembly of 2,000 persons pass without availing himself of it. After the conference was formally declared closed, he addressed the audience, declaring at the outset that what he was going to say had nothing to do with the conference; he was giving expression to his personal views. What he said was very much public. How to resuscitate the pre-1908 temper of the constitutional agitation and to push it forward was his task. He spoke on the existing state of the country and suggested a remedy—Home Rule. The Irish people had said in the past a lot about it, but for the first time an Indian audience heard these words in the context of India. A few months before, Tilak had discussed with some friends the desirability of forming a Home Rule League; but as then, so at the time of the conference, he was trying to gauge repercussions.

In September, at a public meeting, a voice for Home Rule was again echoed; it was the voice of Annie Besant. Ten days later she made a formal announcement in her paper, *New India* (of September 25, 1915): 'After conversation in India and correspondence with England, which have been going on for many months and the beginning of which goes back to discussions held last year with some English politicians and sympathisers with India, it has been decided to start a Home Rule League, with "Home Rule for India" as its only object, as an auxiliary to the National Congress here and its British Committee in England, the special function of the committee being to educate the English democracy in relation to India and to take up the work which Charles Bradlaugh began and which was prematurely struck out of his hands by death.'

This new move was, to the authorities, a storm in the serene atmosphere of constitutional politics to which the prospect of the extremists' re-entry into the Congress added velocity. The Madras Government—Madras being the centre of Besant's activities—was the first to get panicky, and recommended to the Government of India that in order 'to put an end to Mrs. Besant's mischievous writings and public utterances,' she should 'be forced to leave India,' adding that 'she will no doubt continue her campaign in the English and American Press, but we shall be spared her ravings on the Indian platform and her writings will lose a good deal of their danger on account of the

distance between herself and her audience.' The Home Member of the Government of India, while agreeing on the 'mischievous' character of her writings and speeches, did not accede to the recommendation. The Home Member however added in his letter: 'Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League is foolish and wild, and I doubt whether even the National Congress will adopt it. All the calumnious attacks on the British Government, which formed the stock in trade of the extremist orator from 1907 to 1910, are fetched out again and displayed before immature students. I am not in favour of packing off the lady to Europe, but I think that she might now be warned in formal fashion.'

The moderates, who were kept posted with Government views, were opposed to the movement Mrs. Besant contemplated under the banner of the Home Rule League, and when she laid her scheme before the 1915 Congress as also before the Muslim League, she was confronted with stiff opposition, which eventually prevailed, and, not prepared to go to the extent of deserting the Congress, she gave it up for the time being. She had argued that 'Home Rule does not mean that India shall be the mistress of her own household.' This matter-of-fact sentiment had no meaning to the moderates.

The extremists, being apprehensive of the fate of Besant's move at the Congress, had a few days earlier taken a positive step. A conference of extremists from Bombay, Central Provinces and Berar was held at Poona on December 23 and 24, and it was resolved that 'a committee of some fifteen gentlemen be appointed to determine whether it was desirable to establish a League to obtain Home Rule for India and what steps should be taken with this object in view.' On April 2, 1916 the *Mahratta* announced that 'the committee have reported in favour of a pioneer organization for Bombay, the Central Provinces and Berar and that the formation of an All-India League should be postponed till arrangements could be made to establish affiliated provincial organizations in all or nearly all the provinces of India.' This announcement was followed by another meeting of the committee on April 28, at which the following resolutions were adopted: (1) 'A League be established called the Indian Home Rule League.' (2) The object of

the League be to attain Home Rule or self-government within the British Empire by all constitutional means and to educate and organize public opinion in the country towards the attainment of the same.' Joseph Baptista (Bar-at-Law) was made president and N. C. Kelkar (a close associate of Tilak) secretary of the League. Tilak did not accept any office.

In a leading article in the *Mahratta* Tilak explained the reason why the League was necessary: 'It was generally recognized that the time had positively come for an organization to be started for educating public opinion and agitating for Home Rule throughout the country. The Congress was the body which would naturally possess the greatest authority for undertaking such a work with responsibility. The scheme of self-government, which the Congress is supposed to be intending to hatch, served as a plausible excuse for most of the Moderates to negative the definite proposal to establish a Home Rule League. But the Congress, it is generally recognized, is too unwieldy to be easily moved to prepare a scheme for self-government and actively work for its practical success. The spade-work has got to be done by someone. It can afford to wait no longer. The League may be regarded as a pioneer movement and is not intended in any sense to be an exclusive movement.'

Tilak's re-entry into politics was a subject of anxious study by the authorities. They were told by a member of the Intelligence Department: 'Tilak will probably make a show of moderation at first, but as soon as he feels himself secure he will come forward as the leader of all that is impetuous, impatient and anti-Government in the ranks of the Congress.' The Congress of 1915 having passed a resolution at the instance of Mrs. Besant, flinging open the door to the extremists, Government rightly apprehended that if the extremists succeeded in gaining control of the Congress, it would probably not be long before they produced an agitation 'which is bound to be accompanied, as in the past era of extremist agitation, by criminal excesses in the part of the youths and their champion.' It was reported to Government that 'for the present the plans of the Extremists do not seem to include the use of unlawful weapons, but there is no security against their adoption when once

Tilak and his hot-headed friends have established their influence within the Congress.' The Home Rule movement had yet to take shape, but the C. I. D. sleuths began shadowing Tilak and his principal lieutenants often making inquiries from them.

About the middle of 1916 Tilak undertook an extensive lecture tour for instructing the masses on Home Rule and exhorting them to become members of the Home Rule League. He had visited only two places when the Government of Bombay became perturbed and consulted legal opinion on chances of success of the prosecution if it was launched. The Remembrancer of Legal Affairs said: 'It is clear, if the speeches are read fairly as a whole, that the speaker's real object is to vilify and ridicule the Government and to excite unrest and discontent. The speeches are therefore seditious, whatever the kind of "Home Rule" he advocates and whatever the means he proposes to employ to obtain it.' The prosecution was launched and the magistrate held: 'The impression I gather from these speeches is that Tilak wishes to disaffect his audience towards the Government in order that they may wake up to their present unhappy condition, join his Home Rule League and help him in his agitation for a change in the administration of the country.' The magistrate directed Tilak to enter into bonds for a sum of Rs. 20,000 with two sureties each in a sum of Rs. 10,000 for his good behaviour for a period of one year. Since his conviction, first in 1897 and then in 1908, India had travelled a long distance of which the British were well aware, and there was in the judiciary at high level a tendency not to interpret the law of sedition in the way the executive usually did. The Bombay High Court, on this occasion, held that there was no case against Tilak, and cancelled the magisterial order. Once again, Government vindictiveness was an additional arm in the hands of Tilak and in his speeches he now frequently referred to the High Court's judgment, telling the audiences that it was quite lawful to propagate the demand for Home Rule.

He was now sixty, but with the fervour of a young man he made hurricane tours, and week after week he wrote exhortative articles in his papers. He would say: 'Even when war is

going on in all its fierceness at a distance of a hundred miles, Home Rule for Ireland is being discussed in England. How are we to characterise the pretence of the officials that they are quite upset with the philosophical discussion of Home Rule which only breaks the death-like silence of India? We think that Home Rule should be demanded all at once. It need not come into force immediately. A time-limit may be laid down in a Parliament Bill accepting it. Do not ask for crumbs; ask for the whole bread. If there is any method to effect political reforms without riots and without the spread of discontent, it is this—all demanding swarajya.'

The urge for freedom being there in abundance and Home Rule being only a positive name given to it, the question persistently asked, both in England and India, by those who saw India in the context of the war aims of the Allies was, why should there be a time limit? It was suggested that the victory of the Allied cause should be reflected in the grant of Home Rule to India soon after the end of the war. Hyndman's *Justice* (June 22, 1916) for example argued: 'We do not see how Englishmen, who proclaim that they are fighting for national freedom in Europe, can honestly continue a system of foreign despotism over 315,000,000 people in Hindustan.' Quite a sizable of the informed British public opinion refused to reconcile itself to the intricate inconsistencies of British policy: Japan was being given a 'free hand' in China if only to justify British overlordship of India: British citizens were called upon to contribute liberally to the execution of the war and die on the battlefield to preserve the banner of freedom in Europe. It was therefore not difficult for some people in England to be attracted to the Home Rule movement, and on June 7, 1916 a Home Rule for India League was established at 18, Tavistock Square, London, and it was decided to print 10,000 copies of a leaflet entitled 'What India Wants'. This was followed by several leaflets. Meetings were regularly held and Home Rule propaganda was carried on. The executive of the London League consisted of C. Jinarajadasa, Muriel (Countess de la Warr), the Lady Emily Lutyens, George Sydney Arundale, Miss Esther Bright, John Scurr, and George Lansbury. The secretary was Major D. Graham Pole.

In India Mrs. Besant, who had restrained herself at the request of Congress leaders at the 1915 session and who was now being constantly urged by her followers and admirers to give a more elaborate shape to the Home Rule movement, decided to organize an all-India Home Rule League, Tilak's League being at that time confined to Maharashtra and the Central Provinces. A formal announcement was made in September, and within a few days branches of the League were formed at Bombay, Kanpur, Allahabad, Benares, Madanpalli, Kumbakonam, Adyar, Madurai, Ahmednagar, Calicut, and Madras. Now there were two Leagues in the field, and Mrs. Besant and Tilak came to an agreement about the sphere of their respective bodies. Tilak's League was to work in the Central Provinces, Bombay Presidency and Bombay city; and the rest of India was to come under Mrs. Besant's jurisdiction. Discontent in the country had now a rallying point, and more branches of the League quickly came into being in different towns and cities. The agitation for Home Rule was carried on day after day in the Press and on the platform. Mrs. Besant wrote a number of pamphlets dealing with Indian problems in such series as 'New Indian Political Pamphlets', 'The National Conference Series', 'The National Home Rule Series'. She published serveral books, the most widely read at that time being *India, A Nation*. Her literature was translated into Indian languages and distributed in large numbers.

'I quite realize', she would say in her harangues, 'that when people are asleep, and especially if they are rather heavy, they do not like the tomtom that goes on all the night through, beating and beating and never stopping. I am an Indian tomtom, waking up all the sleepers so that they may wake and work for their motherland. That is my task. And they are waking on every side, and the young ones, even more than the old ones, are waking to the possibilities that lie before them. You must remember what India was; you must realize that three thousand years before the time of Christ, India was great in her commerce, great in her trade.'

She became so popular with extremist Congressmen that she was proposed by them for the presidentship of the 1916 Congress. But the Moderates being still in majority, she was

defeated, and their candidate, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, was elected.

She was looked upon by the authorities as an alarming tom-tom and almost as if she were a bomb-thrower. The Governments of the Central Provinces and Bombay Presidency prohibited her entry into their provinces. Her articles in the newspapers were considered as promoting sedition and provocative of racial feeling. She was called on to give security of Rs. 20,000 under the Press Act for the 'better conduct of her publications'. She deposited the amount and soon forfeited it. Depositing the larger sum required of her, she appealed to the High Court (Madras), but failed to secure cancellation of the order. A few extracts from her writings may be reproduced here as a sample:

'Indian labour is wanted for the foreign firms, Indian capital is being drained away by the War Loan, which is to bring no freedom to India if the autocracy has its way, Indian taxation—to pay the interest on the War Loan—will be crushing. When that comes India will realize why I have striven for Home Rule after the war. Only by that can she be saved from ruin, from becoming a nation of coolies for the enrichment of others.'

Referring to Indian revolutionaries, she wrote in *New India* of May 23, 1917: 'Desperate they broke away from all control of their elders, began to conspire, and numbers of them were sent to the living death of the Andaman Islands; some were imprisoned here. Now the students watch with amazement the Premier of Great Britain rejoicing over the results of the similar action of young Russian men and women who conspired and blew up trains and assassinated a Tsar, and who are now applauded as martyrs, and the still living of whom are being brought back in triumph to Russia whose freedom they have made possible. The names which were exercised are held sacred and are crowned with triumph.'

Madras being her headquarters her activities were much more intensive in that province, and the Government, deeply exercised over them, served an order on her as also on her two principal lieutenants, B. P. Wadia and G. S. Arundale, prohibiting them from attending or taking part in any meeting or from delivering any lecture, from making any speech, and from

publishing or procuring the publication of any writing or speech composed by them, placing their correspondence under censorship, and directing that after the expiry of a brief prescribed period, they should take up their residence in one of the places specified in the order. The order awakened great excitement in many parts of the country. An appeal was made to the Government of India seeking reversal of the Madras Government's order; and 'when this failed, a wide agitation followed among the political classes in the Madras Presidency and elsewhere. "Passive Resistance" even was proposed and discussed.'[1]

Mrs. Besant's biographer has quoted her own description of the excitement: 'When we, the internees, foregathered at Ootacamund a whirlwind broke out, raged up and down the country, and stormed over to Britain, Russia, France, America, at several hundred miles an hour. Questions were asked in the House of Commons and the Viceroy's Legislative Council.... Crowds of people and many popular leaders joined the Home Rule League. Meetings were held, resolutions flew about, and Congressmen everywhere fanned the storm and rode it. For three months, violent agitation continued unbrokenly.'[2] Prominent among the Muslims who joined the League was M. A. Jinnah.

The adoption of passive resistance as a means of protest against the internment was discussed in different parts of the country. The matter was then taken up by the All-India Congress Committee and the Council of the Muslim League who met jointly in July (1917). The two bodies prepared a statement on the political situation and demanded (1) an authoritative pronouncement 'pledging the Imperial Government' in unequivocal terms to the policy of making India a self-governing member of the British Empire; (2) immediate steps to sanction the scheme of reforms conjointly framed by the two bodies; (3) the publication of official proposals; and (4) the reversal of the repressive policy.

But the rulers in India were accustomed to resorting to repression as a means to suppress agitations, and instead of lifting

[1] Lovett, p. 138

[2] Theodre Besteman, *Mrs. Annie Besant — A Modern Prophet*, p. 201

the internment order the Government of India instructed the provincial Governments to deal firmly with the tension created by the Home Rule movement. Threats of the Government coming down upon the agitators ruthlessly were held out.

As in the past, the repercussions that followed the repressive actions themselves assumed the form of an agitation perhaps more intense than would have been the case if meetings, speeches and writings had been allowed undisturbed by Government. Some of the provincial Congress committees, whose parent body had thrown aside the Home Rule proposal, now proposed the launching of passive resistance against Government's unbridled interference with civil liberties. In the city of Madras, a pledge was drafted for carrying on the constitutional agitation fearlessly. The first man to sign it was Sir Subrahmania Aiyer, a retired Judge of the Madras High Court; he was president of the All-India Home Rule League. To the dismay of Government, he renounced his knighthood as a protest against the internment of Mrs. Besant and her co-workers. The consequences of the repression were best summed up by the Secretary of State for India, Montagu, who was then in India studying the political situation with a view to drawing up a scheme of reforms. He wrote in his Diary: 'I particularly like Shiva who cut his wife into 52 pieces only to discover that he had 52 wives. This is really what happened to the Government of India when it interned Mrs. Besant.'

Mrs. Besant had no doubt risen to an extraordinary height, but Tilak was still the presiding deity of Indian politics. He was a bigger headache to Government. Already (in February 1917) he had been told by the Punjab Government not to enter its administrative jurisdiction. The Bombay Government was in a dilemma as to the action it should take against him. On March 22, 1917 it sent to the Government of India an account of its difficulties: 'The effect of the judgment of the High Court has been most unfortunate. The violence of the speeches and writings in connection with Home Rule and kindred movements has increased in volume. The Government of Bombay have been watching the development of this movement with growing anxiety. The Governor-in-Council regards Tilak as a man whose political activities are fraught

with public danger, and while their last attempt to cure him ended in failure, they feel that the time has now come for some further measures to be taken in that direction.' The letter suggested that 'all agitation aiming at Home Rule must be regarded as seditious because it is calculated to stir up disaffection not only against the Government as at present constituted but against any form of government that was likely to be established within any reasonable time that can be foreseen.'

What was calculated to stir up disaffection was a matter of opinion—usually the executive held one opinion and the judiciary another. To say publicly that the principle of democracy should be applied to India and the people should be given control of the administration was not forbidden by any law. But since such haranguing was distasteful to most British officers in India, who had been accustomed to treating India as a dependency of pre-democratic age, it perturbed them, and they interpreted it as breach of law; they even regretted that a High Court owing allegiance to the British Government should have held a different view. Left to themselves, they would have thrown the entire code of Indian laws into the sea and preferred ruling according to their sweet will. They actually abused the law by imposing bans on the use of legal rights. For example, the prohibiting of students from attending public meetings where Home Rule was likely to be discussed was illegal inasmuch as it deprived them of a right which they could legally enjoy. The rulers freely violated the principles of the British jurisprudence by promulgating laws which offended against it.

The intention behind their restrictive orders during the Home Rule campaign was to stem the tide of national consciousness which was being taken to the masses by political speakers all over the country. This fact is borne out by the letter which the Government of India addressed to the provincial Governments in March 1917: 'It is scarcely necessary to state that neither the reforms recommended by the Government of India nor any reforms which His Majesty's Government are likely to approve of, can bear resemblance to the extravagant demands for the grant of early Home Rule to

India, which the agitators present to their deluded audiences. It is evident therefore that the wilder the hopes that are excited by the Home Rule organizations, the greater will be the disappointment and the more violent the protests when the actual reforms that may be approved of by His Majesty's Government come in due course to be promulgated. In these circumstances it is most important that the several Local Governments should take steps to check these extravagant expectations which have been engendered by the Home Rule agitators. It seems desirable that the Local Governments should, through their experienced officers, point out to all Indians who are likely to listen to reason that any thought of early Home Rule should be put entirely out of mind. They should warn all men of light and learning and all those who have hereditary influence over the people at large to dissociate themselves from the Home Rule campaign as it is at present being conducted.'

But the problem was how to give effect to these wishes. Some of the rulers, for example those of Bombay, were prepared to throw legal propriety to the winds; they suggested an embargo on public meetings whose agenda of business contained discussion on Home Rule. The Government of India did not agree, not because they were scrupulous about legal propriety but because they feared that by such a general prohibition which 'could not legitimately be issued', the 'difficulties of the provincial Governments would only be increased.' The local Governments ardently gave effect to the centre's instructions through their 'experienced officers'. District officers and their subordinate officers enjoying position of 'awe' in the public contacted managing committees of educational institutions, principals of schools and colleges, men of influence in their districts, and even men known for lack of scruples, and told them to advise those under their influence to refrain from participating in activities connected with the Home Rule movement. In obedience to the command they held meetings and made personal contacts, but failed; in fact they were branded as Government lackeys and made targets of ridicule. Their efforts only produced a contrary effect; more students were now to be found flocking

to Home Rule meetings and raising political slogans, sometimes even in the class-rooms.

During the war years the Government was obliged to feel that it had been deprived of its machinery of doing mischief. Muslims, who had in the earlier periods been used to repudiating the demand for democracy and who stood by Government unreservedly, were now pronouncedly against it. Their leaders who did not hide their sympathy with Turkey had been snatched away and put in jail. The Muslim League was no more under the tutorship of English masters and had joined hands with the Congress in the political demand. Venerated leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Mohammed Ali (and hundreds of others of lower ranks) had been detained without trial. The Lucknow Pact had resolved the problem of Muslim representation in the legislature. For political workers, imprisonment had ceased to be a fear; many had been arrested and many said they were prepared to suffer for the country. Official restrictions on meetings were in many cases ignored. Students had become self-appointed Home Rule missionaries. At many places the villagers were told not to subscribe to the war fund but to pay for Tilak's Home Rule campaign. The Government was reluctant to launch prosecutions because every prosecution meant, in effect, more fuel to the fire of the campaign. The provincial Congress committees which always unreservedly toed the line of the parent body were not only gravitating towards the movement but discussing the launching of passive resistance.

What was Government to do now? The Viceroy suggested to the Secretary of State that some public declaration in regard to the constitutional and administrative changes proposed to be made after the war was desirable. He said: 'Mrs. Besant, Tilak and others are fomenting with great vigour the agitation for immediate Home Rule, and in the absence of any definite announcement by the Government of India as to their policy in the matter, it is attracting many of those who hitherto have held less advanced views. The agitation is having a mischievous effect on public feeling throughout the country. Consistent and malicious attacks on the system and

method of present administration are aggravating the danger.'

The Viceroy's suggestion was accepted by the British Government, and the Secretary of State made an announcement in Parliament on August 22, 1917 saying that 'the policy of His Majesty's Government is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.' The announcement added that 'progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages.' Another pronouncement made on the same date said that the British Government had decided to admit nine Indians to commission rank in the army.

The promissory note of self-government, though not acceptable to progressive sections of Indian politics, can be regarded as a barometer of the intensity of the agitation during the last few years. Only five years before (June 1912) the then Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, had arrogantly declared in Parliament: 'There is a certain section in India which looks forward to a measure of self-government approaching that which has been granted to the Dominions. I see no future for India on these lines. The experiment of extending a measure of self-government practically free from parliamentary control to a race which is not our own, even though that race enjoys the services of the best men belonging to our race, is one which cannot be tried.... Is it conceivable that at any time an Indian Empire could exist on the lines, say of Australia and New Zealand, with no British officials and no tie of creed and blood which takes the place of these material bonds?.... To me that is a world as imaginary as Atlantis.' Crewe of course could not visualise that Indian temper would rise to a point where not only strong protests would be hurled at British rule but (as is discussed in the previous chapter) mutinies would be brought about, Englishmen would be attacked and murdered, bombs would create terror and deprive the rulers of their peace of mind, violent anti-British activities would be organized in half a dozen foreign countries, ship-loads of men would valiantly defy the authorities with full knowledge of the consequences to themselves.

Though the Home Rule campaign continued with added velocity, the principle of reforms enunciated by the Secretary of State in his August announcement was not much different from the demands enumerated in the joint statement of the Congress and the Muslim League. The Dominion Status variety of self-government was not demanded. The provinces were no doubt proposed to be made autonomous units, but British Governors were to remain, and in their executive councils only half the seats were demanded for elected members. Even the Legislative Councils at the centre and in the provinces were not to be wholly elected bodies—the elected element was proposed to be raised to four-fifths, the remaining one-fifth being left for nomination by the British Government's agents. But the year 1917 was very different from 1916. At the 1916 Congress the Moderates still enjoyed a comfortable majority and the Extremists still felt that the prestige of organizational voice belonged to the Congress. In 1917 the voice of the Home Rule League was the voice of the country. The Secretary of State himself said, after an on-the-spot study of the political situation in India, that Tilak 'is at the moment probably the most powerful leader in India'. An official report made to Government conceded: 'The capture of the Congress organization by Mrs. Besant and Tilak is complete. The Moderate Party in the Congress is extinguished. The Congress is completely identified with Home Rule.' And to complete the picture, it was Tilak's nominee, Mrs. Besant, who occupied the presidential chair at the 1917 Congress. The internment order against Mrs. Besant had already been withdrawn after the Secretary of State's announcement.

The main resolution of the 1917 Congress urged 'the necessity for immediate enactment of a Parliamentary Statute providing for the establishment of responsible government in India, the full measure to be attained within a time-limit to be fixed in the statute itself at an early date.' The difference between this resolution and the one adopted in 1916 was rather striking; while the latter asked for 'a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of the British policy to confer self-government on India at an early date,' the former wanted the 'time limit to be fixed at an early date'. The scheme of re-

forms (as agreed upon by the Congress and the League in 1916) remained unaltered and was affirmed again. Gandhi, the future leader of India, did not ask for anything better. He was whole-heartedly with the scheme and caused it to be translated into Indian languages; up to the end of 1917 over a million people were approached and they signified their approval of it by appending their signatures to it.

The announcement made earlier by the Secretary of State accepting in principle the demand for self-government made no mention about the present; the Congress resolution too was vague about it. The man who took notice of the omission in his speech at the session and gave himself a very plausible point to continue the agitation was again that restless soul, Tilak. He said: 'When I say that the executive should be under the control of the legislature, I go so far as to say that even the Governors and the Lieutenant-Governors should be elected. That, however, will be the final step. But in the present circumstances, I shall be quite content, and so I think will most of you, if the first step that we demand is granted to us *immediately*.' There was no response from the rulers; there could not be any because the Congress had not demanded anything immediately. There was a new move in the country's politics; it was made, as always in the past, outside of the Congress and by Tilak. This leader, who had not come in the way of Government's war effort and had even supported it, now openly talked of conditional support. He refused to fall in line with other prominent leaders—the most conspicuous among them being Gandhi who was for unconditional support at all costs—and said that unless he was assured of Home Rule, he would not help in the recruitment. He accused Government of being indifferent to Indian demands and sentiments. He made speeches telling people that he could not honestly ask those who listened to his advice to join the army. The overall effect of the speeches was that Indians would be only wasting their blood if they fought for the victory of the Allied arms; there was no difference between fighting for the Allies and sitting at home.

Apparently with a view to circumventing Tilak, the Viceroy called a war conference (April 27, 1918) to which some prom-

inent political leaders, including Gandhi but excluding Tilak and Mrs. Besant, were invited. Again the exclusion and the conference itself gave a fillip to the agitation. On the eve of the conference a public meeting was held at Delhi (the venue of the conference) under the joint auspices of the Home Rule League, the Provincial Congress Committee, the Indian Association and the Muslim League. The only item on the agenda was: 'The Imperial War Conference and our duty'. The meeting adopted two resolutions: (1) 'The Imperial Government should recognize India's right to full responsible Government, and as a first step, grant the Congress-League scheme of reforms. (2) No assembly can be considered representative of the views of the people and can command their confidence that does not include Tilak, Mohammed Ali, Shaukat Ali (Mohammed Ali's brother), Mrs. Besant and Rabindranath Tagore. While the conference was in session, Tilak and Mrs. Besant sent a telegram to the Viceroy saying that 'any attempt to stop political discussion will be fraught with serious danger to public tranquillity and will be an unheard of inroad on fundamental rights of the people to be resisted by all constitutional means.' After the conference a meeting was held at Bombay, under the presidentship of Tilak, and the invitees to the Viceroy's conference were rejected as not representing the people. Tilak said: 'Of course, the bureaucracy tried to do without the assistance of the 30 crores of Indian subjects; they feel that now the time has come when they cannot do without the assistance of the people of India and, therefore, they will pay money or give bribes in order to get as many recruits as they like. Now, just consider this situation. The bureaucracy do not want to give you self-government, but they want to be protected by your giving your lives.'

This new movement of Tilak, affecting as it did the war directly, caused a good deal of concern to Government, which is evident from the following extract from the Bombay Governor's Executive Council file: 'It is a matter of grave national moment that the Government of India should get all the recruits they can within the next few months; the left-handed co-operation that the Home Rulers are offering can but exercise a check on the flow of recruits, but when Royal sanction is

quoted to what amounts to practically an inducement not to join up till self-government is granted, it would appear to be time for drastic action to be taken.' The Bombay Government was in quandary: Tilak's speeches were actionable under the Defence of India Act, but to arrest him would be worse than not to do so, because the result of the former would mean more incentive to his movement. A way suggested itself; it was to call a war conference at provincial level at Bombay, to which Tilak should also be invited. It was done, and invitations having gone to Tilak's lieutenants as well—N. C. Kelkar, M. A. Jinnah, B. G. Horniman, and Jamnadas Dwarka Das—they all went to the conference.

What they did there is recorded thus in the official file: 'On Mr. Tilak's name being called, he came forward on invitation to the dais on which His Excellency alone was seated. Reading from what appeared to be a type-written paper, he opened his remarks by an expression of the deep loyalty of himself and of all Home Rulers to His Majesty the King Emperor. But, he said, if amendments (to the loyalty resolution) had been allowed he would have liked to have moved an amendment. Proceeding he stated that home defence was intimately connected with home rule, and diverged into a purely political discussion. Interrupting, His Excellency remarked that he could not understand how anyone could wish to move an amendment to a loyalty resolution and that he could not permit a political discussion of a resolution of this character. After some colloquy, in the course of which Mr. Tilak attempted to proceed, he left the platform and returned to his place in the Hall. Mr. Kelkar's name was then called and he came forward to the platform to speak. He followed much the same line as Mr. Tilak commencing with a perfunctory expression of loyalty and immediately thereafter diverging into political topics. On His Excellency interrupting him he asked whether His Excellency wished him to go on. His Excellency replied that he had no wish to stop him but he must ask Mr. Kelkar to respect his ruling that political discussion could not proceed on a loyalty resolution. Mr. Kelkar then retired from the dais. Immediately after, these two gentlemen accompanied by Mr. Horniman, Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Mr. Bomanji left the meeting. Their

departure was made in silence and there was no demonstration.'

A new recruitment drive was to be launched, and the difficult question before Government was whether it would succeed according to the requirement, with Home Rulers exercising their influence against it. The next alternative was to associate Gandhi with the man-power committee; but he told Government: 'I fear that my usefulness will be materially curtailed if I could not have the benefit of his (Tilak's) co-operation and that of other Home Rulers of his calibre. It is hopeless to expect a truly national response and a national army unless the Government are prepared to trust them to do their duty. I should gladly serve on the man-power committee if these leaders are invited to join it.' At a public meeting Gandhi condemned the way the Governor had insulted the Home Rulers at the war conference.

Government emerged weaker from the new device of securing support and the Home Rulers stronger. Tilak's anti-war propaganda (conditional support being its content) now moved forward. He would tell his audiences: 'The British just want you to supply soldiers whom they want for the war. Do not entertain any ambition in your minds. Do not entertain any hope of becoming colonels. They tell us, "a calamity is hanging over India." What is that to us? Why should we come forward to protect that India in which we have no rights, in which we are treated like slaves? .... Government should, by positive deeds, infuse in the people a spirit so that they may feel and say: "We would die for our country." Then I am sure we shall be able to raise an army of a crore of men. But by not conceding the demand of India, the British Government is pursuing a wrong policy. The bureaucracy has overrun the whole nation; and we are not prepared to become soldiers in order to increase the power of these men. What are we to tell our men? Join the army to strengthen the *Zulum** of these English people?'

Serious notice was taken of this speech. Copies were circulated to the Viceroy and the Bombay Governor and their

* Terror

Executive Councillors, and the concensus of opinion was that legal proceedings would be inadvisable and might eventually do more harm to the war effort. The Bombay Government, therefore, issued an order under the Defence of India Rules, forbidding Tilak to speak in public without the written permission of the district magistrate.

Tilak's attitude to the war and to the recruitment drive was quite understandably the attitude of most politically conscious people who were active and whose activities attracted public attention. The effect expected of the Secretary of State's declaration of August 1917 never came off; by systematic attacks it was undone by Tilak and his party. The strategy of 1917 was repeated in 1918, and on July 8, the British scheme of reforms, to be introduced soon after the war, called the Montford (Montagu-Chelmsford) Reforms, was announced. The most important proposal of the scheme was the one relating to the constitution of the provincial executive, which would be divided into two parts; one of the Governor and his councillors appointed by the Crown and the other of ministers to be nominated by the Governor from among the elected members of the Legislative Council. Vital subjects were reserved for the executive councillors and those like local self-government, public health, education, etc. were to be transferred to the ministers. This system of dyarchy was not to be introduced at the centre where the concession proposed was an increase in the number of Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The elected element of the Legislative Councils, with restricted franchise, was to be extended further. The central legislature was to consist of two houses, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. The report also recommended that in the Indian Civil Service the Indian share would be raised to 33 per cent, increasing annually by 1½ per cent until the position was reviewed by a Parliamentary commission to be appointed ten years after the first meetings of the new legislative bodies.

The Montford report was far short of the Congress-League scheme. The substance of power remained wholly in British hands; the appointment of ministers was not the expression of the will of the elected part of the legislature, and they

were responsible to the Governors and not to the Legislative Councils. That the extremists would not accept the report had been foreseen, and therefore thought had already been devoted to organizing a clique for welcoming the reforms. The Congress had passed under the extremists; the moderates, the only people from whom reception could be expected, were a scattered lot. While in India, the Secretary of State (Montagu), to quote from his Diary, 'talked about the formation of a moderate party' with prominent moderates. 'They were', he adds, 'very enthusiastic and talked about editing newspapers and so forth. I think they mean business.' According to plan, shortly before the publication of the Montford Report, a new body, the National Liberal League, was started at Calcutta. The moderates met in a conference in August under the auspices of the National Liberal League, Raja Pearay Mohan Mukherjee presiding. The League accepted the Reforms proposal. Its president even justified the delay in establishing responsible government and went to the extent of saying: 'There are in India eighty races speaking as many different languages and following more than a hundred different forms of religion. Among them there is no unity and hardly any solidarity.'

The Congress held a special session at Bombay in August 1918 to consider the Report. The leading moderates, having already taken a different course and believing that the Congress would reject the Report, abstained from attending the session. But the session was largely attended, there being 3,845 delegates. The Report was condemned as disappointing and unsatisfactory, and the Congress reaffirmed its faith in the Congress-League scheme and declared that nothing less than self-government within the Empire would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people. The Congress demanded a statutory guarantee that full responsible government would be established within a period of 15 years.

The moderates, who were now parading themselves as a rival force, gathered together in what they called the All-India Moderate Conference at Bombay in November 1918. The conference, presided over by Surendranath Banerjea, accepted the Report and said in its resolution: 'The reform proposals of the Secretary of State and the Viceroy of India constitute an

advance on the present conditions both as regards the Government of India and the Provincial Governments and also a real and substantial step towards the progressive realization of responsible government in the provinces.'

The Congress went further ahead at its annual session in December and demanded full responsible government to be established in the provinces at once and that the Montford scheme should be laid aside and a brand new one prepared. The time-limit of 15 years was scrapped and was not provided for in the resolution, although the support to it came from no less a person than Mrs. Besant. Mrs. Besant was no more in the good books of the extremists because of her pro-war attitude during the last few months. The Congress also demanded the right to be represented at the Peace Conference (the war having already ended) and nominated Tilak, Gandhi and Hasan Imam as its representatives.

The Muslim League, which also assembled for its annual session at the same time and place (Delhi), toed the Congress line and demanded that the principle of self-determination, as adopted by the League of Nations, should be applied to India by the British Government, one of the principal parties to the decision of the League of Nations. Like the extremist Congress the Muslim League too was looked upon with suspicion by Government, who proscribed the printed speech of the chairman of the reception committee, M.A. Ansari. It was the Turkish affair, however, which had worked up the anti-British attitude of most Muslims. A few months earlier the Muslims of Calcutta had been badly shaken by an item of war news offending their religious susceptibilities. Many Muslims marched in a fit of rage towards Government House. They stabbed the European deputy commissioner in the neck and looted some cloth shops. The crowd was fired upon by the police, and the Indian Defence Force was called out to picket the city. The agitators again gathered in strength and were again fired upon by a military detachment. The firing made the situation worse; workers in three large mills refused to work and proceeded to join the agitating crowd. There was another round of firing to stop the mill workers.

There were two sides to Muslim politics; one was their

adherence to Hindu-Muslim unity—which they maintained despite mischievous communal riots—for the liberation of India; the other was religion, in which the seat of the Khilafat, Turkey, played a dominating role. The Muslim League president of the 1918 session was apprehensive, and so were the delegates, of Turkey being put under interdict in the peace terms. Expressing himself about it he said: 'I will not be surprised if they (the British) take this opportunity finally to dispose of Turkey and her problems in Europe, and herein lies food for the amplest reflection.' The resolution on the subject hoped for complete reconciliation and lasting accord between the Empire and Muslim States based on terms of equality and justice. The hope was not to materialise, and herein lay the seed of the future struggle, this time under the leadership of Gandhi.

That time was yet some months away. In the mean time Tilak continued to wear the crown and carried his campaign to England, where the demand for Home Rule was being systematically undermined. Just after the August (1917) declaration, some British pensioners of the Indian Civil Service and some others had formed themselves into a union naming it the Indo-British Association, with the object of carrying on a campaign that India did not deserve the self-government promised in the declaration. Like-minded Europeans in India had a similar organization, called the European Defence Association. (During the Home Rule campaign its name was changed to the European Association.) In 1917 the prospective reforms provoked the Association to make itself active. Branches were set up in different provinces all over India and propaganda was started deprecating the August declaration. The Indian Civil Service Association, whose members were all senior Government servants, also raised its voice against the declaration and asked the members to exert themselves against any process intended to lead to the transfer of power to Indians. In India there was a storm of protests against the English officers' moves, but in England little was being done to counter the mischief. Early in 1918 the two Home Rule Leagues—of Tilak and Besant—decided to send Home Rule League Deputations to England. The deputation of the latter left in the midlle of March 1918, but when it reached Gibralter it was

informed that its passports had been cancelled by the British War Cabinet and it had been advised to return home. The other deputation, which included Tilak, was similarly sent back from Colombo.

One can now enjoy the element of amusement in Tilak's intended visit to England. The Government of India was as anxious to send him as he was to go. The War Cabinet had, on the recommendation of the General Staff, informed the Government of India that they would not like the 'energies of the civil population', which 'should be concentrated on work essential to the prosecution of the war, to be distracted by violent inflammatory propaganda.' On the other hand the Government of India pleaded that Tilak was 'more dangerous' in India than he was likely to be in England. Eventually the Government prevailed upon Tilak to agree to the condition that he would not indulge in 'political agitation'. Another work that required Tilak's presence in London was to file a suit against Valentine Chirol whose book, *Indian Unrest*, was considered by Tilak as containing defamatory passages. In September 1918 he left for England, and the first thing he did there was to seek withdrawal of the ban imposed on him. He got the excuse to press for it from the example of a member of the Justice Party of Madras—loyal to the British—who suffered from a similar impediment and who had got it cancelled. He said he should not be discriminated against and secured freedom to speak.

Tilak's activities in England are summed up in a report he sent to Lajpat Rai:

'We arrived here at the end of October and began our work in the first week of November. Some time was necessarily spent in examining how the land lay. Then came on the elections and the whole country was engaged in and busy with electioneering campaign.

'We thought that the Labour Party would return at least a hundred members; but as you know it has only returned 63. All the leading Pacifists are defeated, including Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, Henderson, Lansbury and others. This was a great drawback. But on the whole the Labour Party has progressed and is now in the proud position of being

entitled to form the Opposition. On the other hand the coming Parliament will be pre-eminently a coalition Parliament, in which all what Lloyd George proposes will be carried out. The Liberals are nowhere.

'Under the circumstances we were advised by our friends, and we also thought it reasonable, to secure the support of the Labour Party for our cause. Mr. Baptista has, since his arrival last year, been in touch with Mr. Lansbury and other Labour leaders. This helped us a good deal, and by means of the labour organizations throughout the country, we were able to distribute at the time of elections about ten lakhs of leaflets all over Great Britain and Ireland. There were four different kinds of leaflets published by us. The London branch of the Madras Home Rule League also circulated a memorandum to the candidates.

'The British Congress Committee at first intended to do nothing, but had eventually to send to the different candidates certain questions prepared by them. But this circulation was very limited. We have reported to the All-India Congress Committee the inefficiency of the British Congress Committee here and are waiting to see what action the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee take in the matter. Some of our time was wasted in negotiating with the editor of *India**, Mr. Polak. Without going into details, we might say that *India* is at present doing harm to our cause.

'But though the British Committee would not do anything, it was not advisable to wait till it was roused into work. We, therefore, published a pamphlet on *Self-Determination for India* with two cartoons, and we have sent copies thereof to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, Sir S. P. Sinha, the Maharaja of Bikaner, and to all members of the House of Commons and House of Lords and others. We mean to have it circulated very largely and to follow it up by another pamphlet explaining and criticising the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme and pointing out why and how it should be improved in accordance with the resolutions of the Special Congress session at Bombay.

* The organ of the British Congress Committee

'We cannot go to the Peace Conference as members. We have, therefore, applied for passports to go to France to witness the proceedings of the Conference as spectators. If the passports are obtained, we mean to go to Paris and do what we can to have India's case represented before the Conference.'

Tilak's work in England was a whirlwind campaign, which he conducted by speeches and writings. His was an appeal to the conscience of the English people: should they continue the immoral deed of exploitation and blood-sucking? He commenced his discourse with a long historical review of India, going back to the periods before Christ. Coming to the recent times he dealt with the East India Company, the 'inhuman practices' of which had become a byword in India. He dwelt at some length upon the malpractices of the Company—how its men exploited the country to enrich themselves and tortured and robbed and murdered Indian artisans, at that time the finest skilled workers in the world. He gave an instance: the cutting off of the thumbs of cotton spinners and weavers so that their product could not compete with English exports. The time had now come for the benefits of freedom and liberty to be accorded. And he would say that the Allies were enunciating the democratic principles throughout the world and that Great Britain should make the first start within her own Empire. He carried his appeal into the Joint Parliamentary Committee of the two Houses of Parliament set up to consider the new Government of India Bill, and asked it to fix a time limit for the attainment of full self-government. He asked his British audiences: 'When you acknowledge the intellectual powers of Indians, their advance in science, literature and the fine arts, how do you refuse them the right of self-government and how do you doubt their capacity to manage the affairs of the land of their birth?'

Home Rule campaign was carried to the USA also. It began with Tilak's letter to M. Clemenceau, the president of the Peace Conference (France): 'It is necessary for me to dwell upon the imperative importance of solving the Indian question for purposes of ensuring the future peace of the world and the progress of the people of India. India is self-contained, harbours

no designs upon the integrity of other states, and has no ambition outside India. With her vast area, enormous resources, and prodigious population, she may well aspire to be a leading power in Asia if not in the world. She could, therefore, be a powerful steward of the League of Nations in the East for maintaining the peace of the world and the stability of the British Empire against all aggressors and disturbers of peace whether in Asia or elsewhere.'

Later a practical step was taken. Lajpat Rai with two others, N. S. Hardikar and K. D. Shastri, was sent to the USA. They opened a branch of the Home Rule League at San Francisco—San Francisco which for several years had been the scene of activities of the Ghadar Party, whose functioning was later stopped by the US Government. On May 20, 1919 Hardikar sent a report to Tilak, apprising him of the Home Rule work in America: 'From the 9th of February to the 6th of May, a period of 86 days, I travelled through 20 States of the Union. I gave 83 popular addresses and arranged 25 different conferences. The conferences were held in ten States and 25 large cities and were the result of 24 extensive tours. In the cities the audiences ranged from 25 to 3,000. I sold 4,000 copies of *Self-Determination for India* and 1,500 copies of *Get Together on India*. In all the cities I was received at principal colleges and by the chief newspaper proprietors. Going from one place to another to speak, I could only arrange conferences at 25 places and had to refuse nine invitations.'

Lajpat Rai also sent a report, in which he said: 'Dr Hardikar has returned from his tour which was very successful from every point of view. He brought new members, established new branches, and secured also some funds. We have been issuing occasional bulletins to the United States Press giving them a summary of what we put in the English Press.' He also sent a leaflet by Norman Thomas entitled *Rebellion in India*. Thomas was one of the speakers at an Irish revolutionary meeting in New York (May 8) at which the Indian question was also discussed.

The Government of India was receiving the reports, with much concern, that Lajpat Rai's wide publicity campaign in America was producing tremendous effect. What worried it more was

the association of Americans and Englishmen with the campaign. The Bombay Government and the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council were perturbed over what they called the 'slandering' anti-British propaganda which Indians and their friends were carrying on in the obliging American Press. They had the reports, received from their own sources in America, examined by a senior officer, who suggested lecture tours and employment of some American journalists to write for the Government and of Christian missionaries who had experience of Indian life and knowledge of the British administration in India. The suggestion was accepted and implemented; but compared to the Home Rule campaign it was not much of a success.

As in India so in Britain and America, the Congress was nowhere in the campaign; it was carried on in the name of the Home Rule League and under the direction of Tilak, who was not president either of the Congress or the League. He was the torch-burner and the torch-bearer. In 1919, when he was in England and when a new British act appeared designed to suppress political activities, Gandhi assumed the leadership. The country was electrified with a new zeal; but again the lead did not come from the Congress.

The reader must have a glimpse of Gandhi's personality before he is taken to the scene of the battle of 1919 of which Gandhi was the general; he was the unchallenged leader of all movements until India became free.

14

A Leader in the Making

TO MEASURE precisely the impact of Gandhi's individuality on the people of India is a very difficult task. An idea of it must however be had to understand the speed that the freedom movement gained under his leadership. His tremendous moral force and his ability to make use of it for promoting his mission compelled most Indians and many people abroad to compare him with the Buddha and Christ, nay with Rama and Krishna. When he emerged as a leader of the Indian community in South Africa, he was recognized as possessing distinct characteristics all his own and as strikingly different from other leaders of men in the world. People came under the charm of his personality before they listened to his reason. He modestly claimed: 'I have tried to live according to the teachings of the *Gita*.' He detached himself from the world, and yet he was very much with it: non-attachment was sheet-anchor of the whole philosophy of his life.

Right from his school days, Gandhi had shown the extraordinariness of his character. 'There is an incident', he says in his autobiography—*My Experiments with Truth*—'which occurred at the examination during my first year at the high school and which is worth recording. Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, had come on a visit of inspection. He had set us five words to write as a spelling exercise. One of the words was "kettle". I had mis-spelt it. The teacher tried to prompt me with the point of his boot, but I would not be prompted. It was beyond me to see that he wanted me to copy the spelling from my neighbour's slate, for I had thought that the teacher was there to supervise us against copying. The result was that all the boys, except myself, were found to have spelt every word correctly.

Only I had been stupid. The teacher tried later to bring this stupidity home to me, but without effect. I never could learn the art of "copying". Yet the incident did not in the least diminish my respect for my teacher. I was by nature blind to the fault of elders.'[1]

Gandhi possessed a natural disposition to drink from every stream of virtue that came his way. Those found in Hindu mythological stories attracted him much more. While at school his eyes fell on a book purchased by his father. 'It was *Shravana Pitrabhakti Nataka* (a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents). I read it with intense interest. There came to our place about the same time itinerant showmen. One of the pictures I was shown was of Shravana carrying, by means of slings fitted for his shoulders, his blind parents on a pilgrimage. The book and the picture left an indelible impression on my mind. "Here is an example for you to copy", I said to myself. The agonized lament of the parents over Shravana's death[*] is still fresh in my memory.'[2]

Gandhi goes on to narrate another incident. 'Just about this time, I had secured my father's permission to see a play performed by a certain dramatic company. I could never be tired of seeing it. But how often should I be permitted to go? It haunted me and I must have acted Harishchandra to myself times without number. "Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?" was the question I asked myself day and night. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me. I literally believed in the story of Harishchandra. The thought of it all often made me weep.'[3]

Here is yet another incident of his school days: 'The reason of my dislike for gymnastics was my keen desire to serve as

[1] M. K. Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth* (Second edition, May 1940) pp. 15-6

[*] Shravana, while he was going to bring water from a stream for his thirsty parents, was mistaken for a deer by King Dashrath of Ayodhya, who shot him dead by an arrow. The parents refused the water offered by the King and dehydrated their bodies to death.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 16

[3] *ibid.*, pp. 16-7

nurse to my father. As soon as the school closed, I would hurry home and begin serving him. Compulsory exercise came directly in the way of this service. I requested Mr. Gimi (the headmaster) to exempt me from gymnastics so that I might be free to serve my father. But he would not listen to me. Now it so happened that one Saturday, when we had school in the morning, I had to go from home to the school for gymnastics at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I had no watch, and the clouds deceived me. Before I reached the school the boys had all left. The next day Mr. Gimi, examining the roll, found me marked absent. Being asked the reason for absence, I told him what had happened. He refused to believe me and ordered me to pay a fine of one or two annas (I cannot now recall how much). I was convicted of lying. That deeply pained me. How was I to prove my innocence? There was no way. I cried in deep anguish. I saw that a man of truth must also be a man of care. This was the first and last instance of my carelessness in school.'[4]

And this is the story of a confession: 'A relative and I became fond of smoking.... My uncle had the habit, and when we saw him smoking, we thought we should copy his example. But we had no money. So we began pilfering stumps of cigarettes thrown away by my uncle. The stumps however were not always available, and could not emit much smoke either. So we began to steal coppers from the servant's pocket money to purchase Indian cigarettes.... But much more serious than this theft was the one I was guilty of a little later. I pilfered the coppers when I was twelve or thirteen, possibly less. The other theft was committed when I was fifteen. In this case I stole a bit of gold out of my meat-eating brother's armlet. This brother had run into a debt of about twenty-five rupees. He had on his arm an armlet of solid gold. It was not difficult to clip a bit out of it. Well, it was done, and the debt cleared. But this became more than I could bear. I resolved never to steal again. I also made up my mind to confess it to my father. But I did not dare to speak. Not that I was afraid of my father beating me. No, I do not recall his ever having beaten any of

[4] *ibid.*, pp. 27-8

us. I was afraid of the pain that I should cause him. But I felt that the risk should be taken, that there could not be a cleansing without a clean confession. I decided at last to write out the confession, to submit it to my father, and ask his forgiveness. I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to him myself. In this note not only did I confess my guilt, but I asked adequate punishment for it, and closed with a request to him not to punish himself for my offence. I also pledged myself never to steal in future. I was trembling as I handed the confession to my father. He was then suffering from a fistula and was confined to bed. His bed was a plain wooden plank. He read it through, and pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down. I also cried. I could see my father's agony.... Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart and washed my sin away.... This was for me an object-lesson in Ahimsa*.'[5]

While in England as a student, Gandhi came in contact with a variety of people, and from every contact, good or bad, he derived something to add to his moral stature. It was there that he read the *Gita* for the first time with two English friends and at their request. He says in his autobiography, 'the verses in the second chapter made a deep impression on my mind, and they still ring in my ears. The impression has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book *par excellence* for the knowledge of Truth.'[6]

Then 'a good Christian' introduced him to the Bible, and he read through the Old Testament and the New Testament. 'The New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the *Gita*. The verses, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also, and if any man take away the coat let him have thy cloak too," delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt's "For a bowl

* '*Ahmisa* means literally not hurting, non-violence.'

[5] *ibid.*, pp. 39-41

[6] *ibid*, p. 90.

of water, give a goodly meal", etc. My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita, the Light of Asia,** and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly."[7]

After his return to India and a brief stay here, Gandhi got an assignment to proceed to South Africa from a firm of Porbandar, which had business there also.** In that land of white supremacy and colour hatred, Gandhi was confronted with incidents calling for resistance to evil. The first notable incident occurred while he was travelling in a first class compartment of a railway train. A white passenger came 'and looked me up and down. He saw that I was a "coloured" man. This disturbed him. Out he went and came in again with one or two officials. They all kept quiet, when another official came to me and said, "Come along, you must go to the van compartment". "But I have a first class ticket", said I. "That does not matter", rejoined the other. "I tell you, you must go to the van compartment." "I tell you, I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban, and I insist on going on in it." "No, you won't", said the official. "You must leave this compartment, or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out." "Yes, you may. I refuse to get out voluntarily." The constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment and the train steamed away.'[8]

Gandhi 'decided to take the next available train', and he made a determination, which became the foundation stone of his movements in the future. 'I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial—only a symptom of the deep

* Sir Edwin Arnold's book, which, says Gandhi, 'I read with even greater interest than I did the *Bhagavadgita.*'

[7] *ibid.*, p. 92

** Gandhi left for South Africa in April 1893

[8] *ibid.*, pp. 140-41.

disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.'[9]

The next incident in the course of the same journey was much more serious. This time the trouble arose in the stage-coach running between Charlestown and Johannesburg, there being no railway in those days there. Gandhi had a first class ticket, but when the coach agent discovered he was a 'coloured' man, he (the agent) said: 'Your ticket is cancelled.' When Gandhi gave him 'the proper reply', the leader of the coach, while firmly declining to seat him with the white passengers, gave him one of the seats on either side of the coachbox, which he himself used to occupy. (He was a white man and sat inside with other white passengers.) 'I knew', says Gandhi, 'it was sheer injustice and an insult, but I thought it better to pocket it. I could not have forced myself inside, and if I had raised a protest, the coach would have gone off without me.'[10] The incident intended to be narrated here occurred later on when the coach reached Pardekoph. 'Now the leader desired to sit where I was seated as he wanted to smoke and possibly to have some fresh air. So he took a piece of dirty sack-cloth from the driver, spread it on the footboard and, addressing me, said, "Sami,* you sit on this. I want to sit near the driver." The insult was more than I could bear. In fear and trembling I said to him, "It was you who seated me here, though I should have been accommodated inside. I put up with the insult. Now that you want to sit outside and smoke, you would have me sit at your feet. I will not do so, but I am prepared to sit inside." As I was struggling through these sentences, the man came down upon me by the arm and tried to drag me down. I clung to the brass rails of the coachbox and was determined to keep my hold even at the risk of breaking my wristbones. The passengers were witnessing the scene—the man swearing at me, dragging and belabouring me, and I remaining still. He

[9] *ibid.*, p. 141

[10] *ibid.*, p. 143

* 'Sami' is the corrupt form of 'Swami', a Tamil suffix occuring after many names. In Sanskrit Swami means a master, but to Englishmen 'Sami' was a term of contempt.

was strong and I was weak. Some of the passengers were moved to pity and exclaimed, 'Man, let him alone. Don't beat him. He is not to blame. He is right. If he can't stay there, let him come and sit with us." "No fear", cried the man, but he seemed somewhat crestfallen and stopped beating me. He let go my arm, swore at me a little more, and asking the Hottentot servant who was sitting on the other side of the coachbox to sit on the footboard, took the seat so vacated.'[11]

The next incident of beating took place in Transvaal. Under the laws made for the coloured people, 'Indians might not walk on public footpaths, and might not move out of doors after 9 p.m. without a permit.' But the State Attorney had given Gandhi a letter authorizing him 'to be out of doors at all hours without police interference.' Gandhi always kept this letter on his person whenever he went out. Once one of the police patrols, 'without giving me the slightest warning, without even asking me to leave the footpath, pushed and kicked me into the street. I was dismayed. Before I could question him as to his behaviour, Mr. Coates,* who happened to be passing the spot on horseback, hailed me and said: "Gandhi, I have seen everything. I shall gladly be your witness in court if you proceed against the man. I am very sorry you have been so rudely assaulted." "You need not be sorry," I said. "What does the poor man know? All coloured people are the same to him. He no doubt treats Negros just as he has treated me. I have made it a rule not to go to court in respect of any personal grievance. So I do not intend to proceed against him." "That is just like you", said Mr. Coates, "but do think it over again. We must teach such men a lesson." He then spoke to the policeman and reprimanded him. I could not follow their talk as it was in Dutch, the policeman being a Boer. But he apologised to me, for which there was no need. I had already forgiven him.'[12]

In South Africa also Gandhi came in close contact with a number of moralists, particularly Christians, who endeavoured

[11] *ibid.*, pp. 143-4

* A Quaker.

[12] *ibid.*, p. 163

to convert him and argue that without Jesus eternal peace was absolutely unattainable. Gandhi was a rational critic of religions. He argued:

> It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate son of God and that only he who believed in Him would have everlasting life. If God could have sons, all of us were his sons. If Jesus was like God or God himself, then all men were like God and could be God Himself. My reason was not ready to believe literally that Jesus by his death and by blood redeemed the sins of the world. Metaphorically there might be some truth in it. Again, according to Christianity, only human beings had souls, and not other living beings, for whom death meant complete extinction; while I held a contrary belief. I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice, and a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born.... The pious lives of Christians did not give me anything that the lives of men of other faiths had failed to give.... Thus if I could not accept Christianity either as a perfect or the greatest religion, neither was I then convinced of Hinduism being such. Hindu defects were pressingly visible to me. If untouchability could be a part of Hinduism, it could but be a rotten part or an excrescence. I could not understand the *raison d'etre* of a multitude of sects and castes. What was the meaning of saying that the *Vedas* were the inspired Word of God? It they were inspired, why not also the *Bible* and the *Koran*?[13]

Nevertheless, the contacts with Christians and a study of the writings of great Christians had a share in moulding Gandhi's moral being: 'Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* over-whelmed me. It left an abiding impression on me. Before the independent thinking, profound morality and the truthfulness of this book, all the books given to me by Mr. Coates seemed to pale into insignificance.... Though I took a path my Christian friends had not intended for me, I have remained for

[13] *ibid.*, pp. 170-71

ever indebted to them for the religious quest that they awakened in me.'[14]

There is something in human nature which reacts with compassion to cruelty. It is to be found in greater measure in people more civilized than others. In his experiments with truth, Gandhi met both, compassion and cruelty, in different forms. He was deeply touched by the exhibition of these in a war and its after-effects in South Africa. The Dutch and the English, who were advancing their respective interests, often came into collision; there were skirmishes between them. The English suffered a defeat at Majuba Hill but avenged it in the Boer war, which lasted from 1899 to 1902. The Dutch (known as Boers in South Africa) fought heroically and suffered the consequences of the defeat manfully. 'Lord Kitchener', writes Gandhi, 'left no stone unturned in order to break their spirit. He confined them in separate concentration camps, where they underwent indescribable sufferings. They starved, they suffered biting cold and scorching heat. Sometimes a soldier intoxicated with liquor or maddened by passion might even assault the unprotected women. Still the brave Boer women did not flinch.'[15]

Then came the turn of compassion. 'King Edward wrote to Lord Kitchener saying that he could not tolerate it and that if it was the only means of reducing the Boers to submission, he would prefer any sort of peace to continuing the war in that fashion and ask the General to bring the war to a speedy end. When this cry of anguish reached England the English people were deeply pained. They were full of admiration for the bravery of the Boers.... The late Mr. Stead publicly prayed and invited others to pray that God might decree the English a defeat in the war. This was a wonderful sight. Real suffering bravely borne melts even a heart of stone. And there lies the key to Satyagraha.' The result was that the peace of Vereeniging was concluded, and eventually all the four colonies of South Africa were united under one Government.'[16]

[14] *ibid.*, p. 172

[15] Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 31-2

[16] *ibid.*, pp. 31-2

With his moral force, inherent and acquired, Gandhi was ready for the fights awaiting him in that foreign land; on the one side were the oppressed and suppressed Indians and on the other was a powerful government. Before the European settlers' arrival, South Africa was inhabited by different African tribes. The English migrants settled in Natal, where they obtained some concessions from the native Africans. These white settlers would not do their own manual work, and because the native Africans were found unwilling, they requested the Government of India for the supply of labour. In India British economic policy had rendered many people unemployed, and it was easy to recruit labour. Lest hard and exacting work should discourage and induce the thought of returning home, the settlers proposed a system of contract, and the Government of India undertook to supply indentured labourers. The first batch of such labourers reached Natal on November 16, 1860. Many poor Indians were duped and deceived by the recruiting agents in India; false hopes and prospects were held out to them and they signed the contracts. The indentured labourers were followed by free traders, and when the period of the former's contract was over, they too became free men and chose to stay on in the country to which they had gone by force of circumstances and to whose prosperity they had made no mean contribution. This development was unwelcome to the white settlers, who did not like South Africa to be crowded by Asians. This was the genesis of the colour bar and colour prejudice in South Africa.

Gandhi first did not like to stay on in South Africa only to be insulted. But after finishing with the case for which he had been engaged, when he had prepared to return to India and was attending a farewell entertainment, some one put a copy of the *Natal Mercury* in his hands. He happened to look at the caption 'Indian Franchise', and reading it he discovered that the Natal Legislative Assembly was about to consider a Bill seeking to disfranchise the Indians. In his farewell speech Gandhi suggested that 'the Indians should strenuously resist this attack on their rights'. The suggestion was welcomed, but the audience urged Gandhi to stay on to lead the fight. Gandhi agreed, and the same night he drew up a petition to be pre-

sented to the Legislative Assembly. Funds were collected, volunteers were enrolled, and, in the course of a fortnight, ten thousand signatures were obtained. 'To secure this number of signatures from the whole of the province was no light task, especially when we consider that the men were perfect strangers to the work.' The petition produced the desired effect, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Ripon, 'disallowed the bill and declared that the British Empire could not agree to the establishment of a colour bar in legislation.'[17] Natal Indians, who had detained Gandhi, offered to pay him for his services in connection with the agitation, but he replied: 'I must not accept any salary for public work. I should occasionally have to say hard things to you. Heaven only knows whether I should then retain your affection.'[18]

The agitation led, at the instance of Gandhi, to the foundation of the Natal Indian Congress in 1894.

In the same year the Natal Government came out with another proposal to discourage Indians staying on in Natal: it was to impose an annual tax of £25 on Indians freed from the indenture. Gandhi put the matter before the Natal Congress for discussion, and the Congress immediately resolved to organize 'the necessary opposition'. The only result the agitation produced was that, on the intervention of the Indian Viceroy, Lord Elgin, the tax was reduced to £3. The Indian community was naturally not satisfied, and the struggle was resumed later.

When Gandhi conducted his first movement, he was barely 25 years of age.

He made South Africa a field of his social and political work. In 1896, after a stay of three years, he 'asked permission to go home for six months'. In India, South Africa remained with him very much, and he carried on a campaign through pamphlets, newspapers, and public meetings with the aid of Indian political leaders. He moved from place to place, and while a public meeting was being arranged for him in Calcutta, he received a cable from Durban saying, 'Parliament opens

[17] *ibid.*, p. 50

[18] *My Experiments with Truth*, p. 180

January. Return soon'. He 'concluded some movement hostile to the Indians must be on foot', and took the first available steamer with his family. His steamer and another which left immediately after had about 800 passengers on them. A great ordeal awaited Gandhi and these people.

The cause, in Gandhi's words, was this: 'While in India, I had criticised the Europeans of Natal. I had spoken very strongly against the £3 tax. I had given a vivid account of the sufferings of an indentured labourer named Subrahmanyam who had been assaulted by his master, whose wounds I had seen and whose case was in my hands.'[19] The Europeans in Natal were informed of Gandhi's activities by Reuter's representative in England who had sent a brief cablegram to South Africa, containing an exaggerated summary of Gandhi's speeches. When the Europeans read 'the distorted summary', they were 'greatly exasperated'. And when they were misled into believing that Gandhi was bringing 800 men with him—he had absolutely nothing to do with them—their feelings were further inflamed, and they described the coming of the two ships as an 'invasion' of Natal. They held a meeting which resolved 'that the passengers of both the steamers should be prevented from landing in Natal'. A committee of Europeans was formed to give effect to the resolution, and the committee served threatening notices upon the passengers. 'The notices expressly stated that the Europeans of Natal were in a dangerous temper and said in effect that if in spite of the warning the Indian passengers attempted to land, the members of the committee would attend at the port and push every Indian into the sea. The passengers were asked to go back to India, but they flatly declined to do so. The whole proceeding was illegal, having been taken by some people and not the Government of Natal, but the Government was silent. What the Government did to 'regularise' the illegal interference was to impose quarantine in order to postpone landing. The Europeans offered inducements of compensation to the passengers if they agreed to return, but these proved futile. The quarantine had definite limit; it was lifted after twenty-three days, and the

[19] *Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 85-6

steamers were permitted to steam into the harbour.

At this stage the Attorney-General of the Government of Natal, Harry Escombe, adopted a clever device to pacify the provocation. He addressed a meeting of Europeans and said: 'The Europeans in Durban have displayed commendable unity and courage. The Government has also helped you.... If you now prevent by force a single Indian passenger from landing, you will injure your own interests and place the Government in an awkward position.... I would therefore advise you to disperse and not to obstruct these people. I assure you, however, that the Government of Natal will obtain from the Legislative Council the requisite powers to restrict future immigration.'[20] The speech had a salutary effect; the crowd of Europeans dispersed, and both the steamers came into port.

But Gandhi was different from other passengers. In fact he was to be made the main target of the Europeans' attack. Escombe sent Gandhi a message advising him not to land with the others but to wait until the evening when he would send the Superintendent of Water Police to escort him home. Gandhi agreed but later changed his mind on the advice of a European friend, Laughton, who said he did not like the idea of Gandhi entering the city 'like a thief or offender'. He added: 'If you comply with Escombe's suggestion, you will stand humiliated. I would, therefore, advice you, if you are ready, to accompany me just now.' It was about half-past-four in the evening, and as soon as they landed, some boys saw them. What happened then may be described in Gandhi's own words:

> As I was the only Indian who put on a turban of a particular type, they at once recognised me, began to shout "Gandhi, Gandhi, thrash him, surround him", and came up towards us. Some began to throw pebbles at us. A few elderly Europeans joined the boys. Gradually the party of rioters began to grow. Mr. Laughton thought that there was danger in our going on foot. He, therefore, hailed a rickshaw. I had never sat in a rickshaw before, as it was

[20] *ibid.*, pp. 90-1

> thoroughly disgusting to me to sit in a vehicle pulled by human beings. But I then felt that it was my duty to use that vehicle.... These rickshaws are pulled by Zulus.* The elderly Europeans and the boys threatened the rickshaw puller that if he allowed me to sit in his rickshaw, they would beat him and smash his rickshaw to pieces. The rickshaw boy, therefore, said "kha" (meaning "no") and went away. I was thus spared the shame of a rickshaw ride.
>
> We had no alternative now but to proceed to our destination on foot. A mob followed us. With every step we advanced, it grew larger and larger. The gathering was enormous when we reached West Street. A man of powerful build took hold of Mr. Laughton and tore him away from me. He was not therefore in a position to come up with me. The crowd began to abuse me and shower upon me stones and whatever else they could lay their hands on. They threw down my turban. Meanwhile a burly fellow came up to me, slapped me in the face and then kicked me. I was about to fall down unconscious when I held on to the railings of a house nearby. I took breath for a while and, when the fainting was over, proceeded on my way. I had almost given up the hope of reaching home alive. But I remember well that even then my heart did not arraign my assailants.[21]

While yet away from his destination, Gandhi happened to meet the wife of the Superintendent of Police, who knew him well and undertook to escort him. Blows were still showered at him until the Superintendent of Police came to know of the incidents and sent a party of constables for his protection. He was not safe at the destination either. Thousands of Europeans gathered before the house and told the owner that if he did not hand over Gandhi to them, they would burn him and his house along with Gandhi. They were determined to carry out their resolve, but the prudent superintendent of police

* A South African tribe

[21] *ibid.*, pp. 93-5

managed to send away Gandhi under the disguise of an Indian police constable. When the crowd was convinced that Gandhi was no more in the house, it melted away.

These events had their repercussions in England, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies cabled to the Government of Natal asking it to prosecute Gandhi's assailants and to see that justice was done to him. Gandhi again gave proof of his superiority over the Europeans. When the Attorney-General called him and conveyed to him the contents of the cable, he said: 'I must say at once that I have already made up my mind not to prosecute my assailants.... When I decided to land and proceed with Mr. Laughton, I had made up my mind that I should not feel aggrieved in case I was injured. Prosecuting my assailants is therefore out of the question. This is a religious question with me.'[22] The Attorney-General demanded a note clearly stating that Gandhi, on his own responsibility, refused to prosecute his assailants. He at once wrote it out and handed it over to the Attorney-General.

Gandhi's age at this time was 27. Ten years later he took a vow of *Brahmacharya* (abandonment of sex relationship), being prompted partly by the 'object to escape having more children' and partly by public service. He had been an advocate of self-control as against the use of 'contraceptives'. Writing about it 20 years later he said, 'let no one believe that it was an easy thing for me. Even when I am past fifty six years, I realize how hard a thing it is.'[23] He applied to himself other restraints in order to keep the vow: 'Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of the vow. I found that complete control of the palate made the observance very easy, and so I now pursued my dietetic experiments not merely from the vegetarian's but also from the *brahmachari's* point of view.... As an external aid to *brahmacharya,* fasting is as necessary as selection and restriction in diet. So overpowering are the senses that they can be kept under control only when they are completely hedged in on all sides from above and from beneath. It is common knowledge that they are powerless without food,

[22] *ibid.,* pp. 101, 103
[23] *My Experiment with Truth,* p. 257

and so fasting undertaken with a view to control the senses is, I have no doubt, very helpful.'[24] And Gandhi's living was becoming ever more pure, simple, and disciplined. He reminded himself of what poet Nishkulanand had sung; 'Renunciation without aversion is not lasting', and of the *Gita's* lofty lesson: 'The sense-objects turn away from an abstemious soul, leaving the relish behind. The relish also disappears with the realization of the Highest.'

Gandhi believed in self-help; to some extent it was thrust on him: 'I once went to an English hair-cutter in Pretoria. He contemptuously refused to cut my hair. I certainly felt hurt, but immediately purchased a pair of clippers and cut my hair before the mirror. I succeeded more or less in cutting the front hair, but I spoiled the back. The friends in the court shook with laughter. "What's wrong with your hair, Gandhi? Rats have been at it?" "No, the white barber would not condescend to touch my black hair", said I, "so I preferred to cut it myself, no matter how badly." The barber was not at fault. There was every chance of his losing his customers if he should serve black men.'[25]

In 1899 he left for India, feeling that his 'work was no longer in South Africa but in India'. He added to his moral stature while leaving by another example of renunciation. Costly gifts were presented to him for his service to the Indian Community; they included gold and silver articles and also articles of costly diamond. One of the gifts was a gold necklace worth fifty guineas meant for his wife. He argued within himself: 'What right have I to accept all these gifts? Accepting them, how could I persuade myself that I was serving the community without remuneration?' He had a sleepless night; he walked up and down his room 'deeply agitated'; even the gift for his wife, he argued, 'was given because of my public work, and so it could not be separated from the rest.' He further argued: 'I have no costly ornaments in the house. We have been fast simplifying our life. How then can we afford to have gold watches? How can we afford to wear gold chains and diamond

[24] *ibid.*, pp. 257-8
[25] *ibid.*, pp. 262-3

rings? I am exhorting people to conquer the infatuation for jewellery.'[26] And he decided that he could not keep these things and created a trust of them in favour of the Indian community.

An interesting episode of this act of renunciation is worth mentioning here. Before making the announcement of his decision, Gandhi consulted his children and wife; the children 'readily agreed' but the wife objected. 'You may not need them', she said, 'your children may not need them. Cajoled, they will dance to your tune. I can understand your not permitting me to wear them. But what about my daughters-in-law? They will be sure to need them. And who knows what will happen tomorrow? I would be the last person to part with the gifts so lovingly given.' Gandhi mildly put in: 'The children have yet to get married. We do not want to see them married young.... And surely we shall not have, for our sons, brides who are fond of ornaments. And if, after all, we need to provide them with ornaments, I am there. You will ask me then.' The wife retorted: 'Ask you? I know you by this time. You deprived me of my ornaments, you would not leave me in peace with them. Fancy you offering to get ornaments for the daughters-law, you who are trying to make *sadhus** of my boys. No, the ornaments will not be returned. And pray what right have you to my necklace?' Gandhi rejoined: 'But is the necklace given you for your service or for my service?' The wife said: 'I agree. But service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service? You forced all and sundry on me making me weep bitter tears, and I slaved for them.' He ultimately 'succeeded in extorting a consent from her'. Even the gifts received by him earlier—in 1896 and 1901—were all returned.[27]

Gandhi returned to India in 1901 and attended that year's Congress, making an impression of his usual extraordinariness. At the site of the session, 'there was no limit to insanitation.

[26] *ibid.*, p. 270
* hermits
[27] *ibid.*, pp. 271-2

There were only a few latrines to serve a large multitude. When Gandhi drew the volunteers' attention towards the stinking latrine, he was told they could not help it. He asked one of them for a broom. 'The man stared at me in wonder. I procured one and cleaned the latrine.' The Congress session had yet to begin, and thinking that he should in the meantime do some service for it, he went to one of the secretaries. The secretary scanned him and said with a smile: 'I can give you only clerical work. Will you do it?' 'Certainly', replied Gandhi, 'I am here to do anything that is not beyond my capacity.' The secretary was pleased. 'That is the right spirit, young man,' he said; and addressing the volunteers who surrounded him, he added, 'Do you hear what this young man says?' (The secretary did not ask Gandhi's name and did not know that the young man was the leader of the entire Indian community in South Africa.) Gandhi even 'volunteered to do the bearer's duty, and the old secretary 'did not mind my doing little acts of personal service for him. In fact he was delighted.' Asking Gandhi to button his shirt, he would say, 'You see, now, the Congress secretary has no time even to button his shirt.'[28]

After the Congress session Gandhi made a tour through India, meeting political leaders and other people and acquainting himself with the condition of the people and politics. He travelled third class. He intended to settle down in India, but again received a cable from South Africa: 'Chamberlain expected here. Please return immediately.' (Chamberlain was then Secretary of State for the Colonies.) The Indians of South Africa intended to wait in deputation on Chamberlain to represent their grievances and seek redress, and they could think of no other person than Gandhi to lead them. At Durban the first deputation met Chamberlain, and he summarily disposed of it saying that 'the Imperial Government has little control over self-governing Colonies'. Another deputation was to meet the Secretary of State in the Transvaal, and Gandhi was naturally again chosen as leader. Indians were required under the law to apply for and obtain permits to enter the Transvaal, and Gandhi got one through the Police Superintendent of Dur-

[28] *ibid.*, p. 278

ban, who was his friend. In the Transvaal he was insulted and refused permission to be with the deputation. The officer concerned 'summoned' him and said: 'What brings you here? Don't you know that you have no right to come here? The permit you hold was given to you by mistake. You cannot be regarded as a domiciled Indian. You must go back. You shall not wait on Mr. Chamberlain.' In vain did the Indians plead that Gandhi was the most suitable man to represent them. The arrogant officer did not offer Gandhi a seat while talking to him and gave his companions 'a sound scolding', sternly advising them to send him away.

A few years before, in 1899, the Indian community had only at the insistence of Gandhi, helped the British in the Boer War. Gandhi had argued that the community was fighting for its rights as British subjects and that as such should help the British. Now the insulted Indians told Gandhi: 'It was at your instance that the community helped in the war, and you see the result.' Gandhi did not regret the advice he gave them. He said: 'I maintain that we did well in taking part in the war. In doing so we simply did our duty. We may not look forward to any reward for our labours, but it is my firm conviction that all good action is bound to bear fruit in the end.' And he decided to stay on in the Transvaal.

The Indians had been organized to resist the restrictions placed on them, and as if this were a challenge to the white rulers, they came with more and more stringent measures against them. The Natal Government issued an Ordinance designed to circumvent the Imperial Government's restraint on the Bill which sought to disenfranchise the Indians. The substance of one of the clauses of the Ordinance is: 'No person who is a native of countries which have not hitherto possessed elective representative institutions based on the parliamentary franchise can be placed on the voters' roll. And the Transvaal Government decided to prevent fresh Indian immigrants from entering that colony and to render the position of the old Indian settlers so uncomfortable that they would feel compelled to leave the country in sheer disgust, and even if they did not leave, they would be reduced to a state bordering on serfdom.

A Bill was drafted to give effect to the Transvaal Government's intentions: 'Every Indian, man, woman or child of eight years or upwards, entitled to reside in the Transvaal, must register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate of registration.' Such a law, the Government hoped, would enable it to prevent Indians from surreptitiously entering the Transvaal or to remove unauthorised residents from the country.

Now came the time for Gandhi to start his first mass movement. A public meeting of Indians was held on September 11, 1906. It was attended by delegates from various places in the Transvaal. The meeting solemnly decided not to submit to the proposed measure in the event of it becoming law and 'to suffer all the penalties attaching to such non-submission'.

The opposition movement contemplated was to be some kind of passive resistance. Hosken, one of the Europeans sympathetic to the Indians, suggested that the Indian community, being numerically very small and possessing no arms, should take to passive resistance, 'which is a weapon of the weak'. An idea connoting weakness or helplessness was repulsive to Gandhi, and he urged that the Indians' resistance should connote 'soul force' and that the phrase 'passive resistance' was apt 'to give rise to terrible misunderstanding'. In the resistance of his variety, physical force, even if it was available, had absolutely no place. He felt that a new term for his movement should be invented. A small prize was announced in the community's organ, *Indian Opinion*, and suggestions were invited. One of the competitors suggested 'Sadagraha', meaning 'firmness in a good cause'. Gandhi liked it, but considering that it did not represent his whole idea he changed it to 'Satyagraha'. 'Satya' (Truth), he argued, 'implies love' and 'Agraha' (firmness) 'engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force.' And his movements thereafter came to be known as Satyagraha movements.

The measure proposed by the Government became law after a brief period of obstruction. The obstruction came from the Imperial Government. The Transvaal was yet a Crown colony, but was to be granted self-government on January 1, 1907. In 1906, the proposed law was, as it had to be, referred to the Im-

perial Government, which refused to accord it the necessary sanction. But in 1907 the first thing the Transvaal Government did, after adopting the budget for the year, was to enact the anti-Indian legislation. The Indians, who had already resolved not to obey it, did not go for registration. After some effort the Government could get only about 500 Indians willing to register—the Indian population of the Transvaal was about 13,000. The authorities were in a state of predicament over continued disobedience of the law; they could not arrest the entire Indian population. They chose some leading men and served on them notices asking them to leave the Transvaal within 48 hours. There was disobedience again, and the men were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Gandhi was of course one of them. When the jails began to be filled up and the spirit of defiance was on the ascent, the authorities descended for a settlement. Gandhi was taken to the Prime Minister, General Smuts. Smuts congratulated Gandhi on the Indian community having remained firm even after his imprisonment and said: 'I assure you that I will repeal the Asiatic Act as soon as most of you have undergone voluntary registration.' He pleaded his helplessness saying that the Europeans wanted this law, and these were mostly not Boers but Englishmen. (Smuts was a Boer.) Gandhi agreed to the proposal, and all the prisoners including himself were released. The men going for the registration were also required to give all ten fingerprints. A new trouble awaited Gandhi, not from the Government but from one of his own men.

As he was explaining the settlement to a meeting of Indians, a Pathan stood up and greeting Gandhi with a volley of questions, said: 'We have heard that you have betrayed the community and sold it to General Smuts for 15,000 pounds. We will never give the finger-prints nor allow others to do so.' The meeting ignored the Pathan's outburst and ratified the settlement. A few days later (February 10, 1908) when Gandhi was going to take out a certificate of registration, the Pathan Mir Alam accosted him and asked him where he was going. Gandhi had hardly finished his reply when a heavy cudgel blow descended on his head from behind. He at once fainted with the words *He Rama* (Oh God) on his lips, lay prostrate on the

ground and had no notion of what happened. More blows and kicks followed. With his lip and cheek badly lacerated and pain in the teeth and ribs, he was picked up and taken for treatment to the house of Rev. Joseph Doke, a former editor of *Indian Opinion*.

As before Gandhi emerged a greater man from this ordeal also. When he regained consciousness he asked Doke, 'where is Mir Alam?' On Doke telling him that Mir Alam had been arrested along with other assailants, he said: 'They should be released.' After his wounds in the cheek and on the upper lip were stitched up and medicine was applied to the ribs, he addressed a short note to the Indian community and sent it for publication. The note said: 'Those who have committed the act did not know what they were doing. They thought that I was doing what was wrong. They have had their redress in the only manner they know. I therefore request that no steps be taken against them.'[29]

And he told the Registrar of Asiatics: 'I wished to come to your office, give ten finger-prints and take out the first certificate of registration, but God willed it otherwise. However I have now to request you to bring the papers and allow me to register at once. I hope that you will not let any one else register before me.... I am pledged to take out the first certificate if I am alive and if it is acceptable to God.' His wish was done. But he did not succeed in securing the release of his assailants. The Europeans of Johannesburg addressed a strong letter to the Attorney-General (to whom Gandhi had wired saying that he did not hold them guilty) insisting that whatever views Gandhi might hold, the offence must be punished. Mir Alam and one of his companions were sentenced to three months' hard labour.

But the settlement, whose sanctity was enhanced by the assault on Gandhi and the spirit of forgiveness shown by him at a time when ordinary mortals are bound to be affected by severe provocation, was broken by Smuts. In fact the new Bill Smuts introduced in the legislature not only allowed the old law to remain but provided for more stringent measures against

[29] *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 261

Indians. The settlement and all that had happened since its conclusion was utilized by Gandhi to make the Indian community more determined to resist the designs of the white rulers. A bonfire of the certificates taken out by Indians in accordance with the settlement was decided upon. Gandhi religiously stuck to the letter and spirit of Satyagraha. More than 2,000 certificates had been voluntarily returned to the Satyagraha Committee, but instead of using the usual art of exhortation, Gandhi told the people at a public meeting: 'If there are any persons here who doubt their ability to stand the ordeal, there is still time for them to have their certificates back. Nobody need be ashamed of getting his certificate back just now, as in doing so he will be exhibiting a certain kind of courage. But it would be not only shameful but also detrimental to the best interest of the community to get a copy of the certificate afterwards.'[30] Many voices at once answered, 'we do not want the certificates; burn them'. One of the notable men at the meeting was Mir Alam. (He had since been released.) He stood up and confessed that he had wronged Gandhi by assaulting him. The climax of Gandhi's forgiveness came when Mir Alam went forward to hand over his certificate. Gandhi writes: 'I took hold of his hand, pressed it with joy, and assured him once more that I had never harboured in my mind any resentment against him.' The certificates were consigned to the flames.

The law was broken and the satyagraha campaign proceeded apace vigorously. Its scope was extended to apply to another law, the Transvaal Immigrants Restriction Act, which was passed in the same year. The Restriction Act aimed at preventing entry of Indian newcomers into the Transvaal; the term, 'newcomers' included the Indian residents of Natal. The so-called white colonies were confronted with an unprecedented situation. The authorities were provoked and adopted all possible revengeful measures. There were arrests, imprisonment, deportation and beating, assaults and thrashing. Gandhi was also arrested and confined in a solitary cell reserved for dangerous prisoners.

[30] *ibid.*, p. 312

After quite a few years of struggle had rolled by there was again a settlement, a promise again to be broken. The Indian leader, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, visited South Africa in 1912. He was given a respectful reception by the Government and told that Indian demands would be conceded. Conveying the glad tidings to Gandhi he said: 'You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The Black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the emigration law. The £3 tax will be abolished.' With his experience of the Government and its Ministers, this prospect of a hundred per cent victory was too much for Gandhi to swallow. He replied: 'You do not know the Ministers as I do. I am not hopeful in the matter as you are. But I have no fears either. It is enough for me that you have obtained this undertaking from the Ministers. It is my duty to fight it out only when it is necessary and to demonstrate that ours is a righteous struggle. The promise given to you will serve as a proof of the justice of our demands and will redouble our fighting spirit, if it comes to fighting after all.'

The events that followed vindicated Gandhi's judgment. Smuts did not withdraw any of the offending laws and, as if to add insult to the injury, reiterated in the House of Assembly that the £3 tax would remain. This tax now became the third item of the satyagraha struggle. The first impact of the reinvigorated struggle was experienced by the coal mines of Newcastle, 36 miles from the Transvaal border. The workers declared strike and offered themselves for satyagraha. In what way they should defy the law was left to Gandhi to decide. He laid down that this 'army' of satyagraha would cross the Transvaal border and cover the 36 mile journey on foot. The Great March, as Gandhi called it, began on October 28, 1913. Rules of discipline were framed and every satyagrahi was called upon to observe them rigidly. The marchers, 2,000 men, 122 women and 50 children, halted at Charlestown near the border, from where Gandhi wrote to the Government informing it that the satyagrahis did not propose to enter the Transvaal with a view to domicile but intended to cross the border as a protest against the Ministers' breach of the pledge and as a demonstration of their distress at the loss of their self-respect.

While the march was on Gandhi was arrested. Securing his release on bail, he again appeared to lead the movement. He was thus arrested and released twice. The marchers, all of them, were also arrested. Gandhi was sentenced to nine months imprisonment with hard labour. And the marchers were deported in three special trains to Natal and clamped in jail. But naturally fearing that the absence of the workers would compel the mines to be closed down, the Government hit upon a plan. They fenced the mine compounds with wire netting and proclaimed them as outstations to the Dundee and Newcastle jails, the mine-owners' European representatives being appointed as 'jail' warders. But the prisoners refused to be duped by this trick. They declined to work and were brutally whipped. 'The insolent men dressed in brief authority over them kicked and abused them and heaped upon them other wrongs which have never been placed on record.' These incidents produced anxious repercussions in India. Even the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, publicly criticised the South African Government and defended the action of the satyagrahis, but in South Africa the effect was further cruelty. Provoked by the authorities' attempt to take them back to work, the workers threw stones and the authorities opened fire killing and wounding many of them.

Ultimately, success came to Gandhi. The South African rulers yielded, and abolished the £3 tax and cancelled or modified the other anti-Indian measures. Gandhi returned to India in 1914.

But the last phase of Gandhi's struggle for South African Indians was yet to be joined. Resentment had again and again been expressed in the Indian Press and on the Congress platform over their plight. In March 1916 Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council of India for the abolition of the indenture system. The motion was accepted by the Viceroy but made virtually ineffective by his statement in which he said that the abolition would take place 'within such reasonable time as will allow of alternative arrangements being introduced'. In February 1917 Malaviya again asked for leave to introduce a bill for immediate abolition of the system. But the Viceroy refused permission.

Gandhi now thought of an all-India agitation. To begin with a meeting was held under the auspices of the Imperial Citizenship Association and a resolution was adopted fixing July 31 as the deadline by which the Government was asked to abolish the system. The Bombay meeting gave a lead and the meetings that followed in different cities and towns of India endorsed the resolution. Gandhi made a tour of the country and attended the meetings at a number of places. There was, according to him 'unbounded enthusiasm'. Gandhi was again successful. Before the deadline the Government of India made an announcement stopping the emigration at once.

It was the uniqueness of Gandhi's personality that got him a considerable amount of following and loyalty from the Indians in South Africa and that compelled the white rulers to come to terms with him. He returned to India permanently, and the rulers again deprived the Indians of the rights Gandhi had secured for them. Nothing can be a better proof of the uniqueness.

Gandhi's way of handling small things of life was all his own. From it emerged a magnetic force attracting all around him to his rock-like steadfastness, to his faith and principles. While he was in South Africa his second son, Manilal, then ten years old, had a severe attack of typhoid, 'combined with pneumonia and signs of delirium at night'. The doctor prescribed eggs and chicken, saying that medicine would have little effect. Gandhi told the doctor that they were all vegetarians and that he could not possibly give either of the two things to his son. 'To my mind it is only on such occasions that a man's faith is truly tested.... Even for life itself we may not do certain things. Religion, as I understand it, does not permit me to use meat or eggs for me or mine even on occasions like this, and I must therefore take the risk that you say is likely.' Then, arguing within himself, 'the thread of life is in the hands of God', he had recourse to the natural treatment and gave the son a wet sheet pack and 'covered him with two blankets'. He prayed to God, 'My honour is in Thy keeping, oh Lord, in this hour of trial'. God's name was on his lips. After a short time, he returned to the son's bed. The temperature was going down, and after a while the boy recovered.

Some time later his third son, Ramdas, happened to break his arm while playing. He was eight years old. Gandhi did not call a doctor; 'this was the time when I was full of faith in my experiments in earth treatment'. He washed the wound, applied a clean earth poultice, and tied the arm up. 'This sort of dressing went on daily for about a month until the wound was completely healed.'

Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, 'had frequent haemorrhage'. She was advised a surgical operation, 'to which she agreed after some hesitation'. The patient, who was extremely emaciated, was in Durban while Gandhi was at Johannesburg. The doctor telephoned him for permission to give her beef tea. Gandhi replied saying he could not grant the permission, but that if she was in a condition to express her wish she might be consulted, and she was free to do as she liked. The doctor said he would not consult the patient's wishes and asked Gandhi to come. By the time Gandhi came the doctor had already given her beef tea. A great moral wrong was done to Gandhi by the doctor whose only motive was to keep the patient alive. Gandhi told him: 'Now, doctor, I call this a fraud'. The doctor not willing to take responsibility for a patient ignoring his advice, she was removed by Gandhi in a precarious condition from Durban to Phoenix. God again vindicated Gandhi's faith, and his wife survived the ordeal.

An offshoot of this incident is more interesting. After a brief period, Kasturba again got haemorrhage. When Gandhi's remedies failed, he entreated her to give up salt and pulses. She did not agree and challenged him saying that even he could not give up these articles if he were advised to do so. He was 'pained and equally delighted—delighted in that I got an opportunity to shower my love on her'. He said to her: 'You are mistaken. If I was ailing and the doctor advised me to give up these or any other articles, I should unhesitatingly do so. But there! Without any medical advice, I give up salt and pulses for one year whether you do so or not.' She was 'rudely shocked and exclaimed in deep sorrow': 'Pray forgive me. Knowing you, I should not have provoked you. I promise to abstain from these things, but for heaven's sake take back your vow. This is too hard on me.' But Gandhi was adamant:

'It is very good for you to forego these things. I have not the slightest doubt that you will be all the better without them. As for me I cannot retract a vow seriously taken. And it is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for man.' For many years Gandhi did not take salt. 'I would like to count this incident,' he says, 'as an instance of satyagraha.'

An instance of fasting for purification may be narrated in his own words: 'In those days I had to move between Johannesburg and Phoenix. Once when I was in Johannesburg I received tidings of the moral fall of two of the inmates of the Ashram. News of an apparent failure or reverse in the Satyagraha struggle would not have shocked me, but this news came upon me like a thunderbolt.... I felt that the only way the guilty parties could be made to realize my distress and the depth of their own fall would be for me to do some penance. So I imposed upon myself a fast for seven days and a vow to have only one meal a day for a period of four months and a half. My penance pained everybody, but it cleared the atmosphere.' In later years Gandhi made longer fasts—14 days, and then 21 days—at a stretch.

Among the Europeans who came under the spell of Gandhi's personality in South Africa, one was Hermann Kallenbach, a German. He was accustomed to a rich living; he was 'expending Rs. 1,200 monthly on himself over and above the house rent'. He took to simple living and a vow to relinquish his earthly possessions. He was very fond of binoculars, and had one or two costly pairs when he was coming to India with Gandhi in 1914. In the ship Gandhi 'tried to impress on him that this possession was not in keeping with the ideal of simplicity that we aspired to reach. Our discussions came to a head one day as we were standing near the porthole of our cabin.' Gandhi told him: 'Rather than allow these to be a bone of contention between us, why not throw them into the sea and be done with them?' Kallenbach replied: 'Certainly, throw the wretched things away.' And Gandhi rejoined: 'I mean it. And forthwith I flung them into the sea. They were worth some £7.' This was but one out of the many incidents that happened between Mr. Kallenbach and Gandhi.

Gandhi's non-possession vow cost him the affection of his elder brother, who 'had been as father' to him. After he had taken to public service in South Africa, he wrote to his brother saying 'that I had given him all that I had saved up to that moment but that henceforth he should expect nothing from me, for future savings, if any, would be utilized for the benefit of the community.' It meant severance of family relations. 'My brother gave me up and practically stopped all communication. I was deeply distressed, but it would have been a greater distress to give up what I considered to be my duty. But that did not affect my devotion to him.'

Gandhi gave up his insurance policy arguing, 'after all the real protector is the Almighty. In getting my life insured I had robbed my wife and children of their self-reliance.... What happened to the families of the numberless poor in the world? Why should I not count myself as one of them?'

He travelled third class. In 1915, the year of Kumbh fair, held once every 12 years, he went to Hardwar which, with the Ganga river, is regarded as one of the holiest places of Hindus, and had one of the most agonizing experiences of third class travelling in India. Tens of thousands of people were returning from Hardwar. Gandhi and the fellow passengers 'were huddled into carriages for goods or cattle. These had no roofs, and what with the blazing midday sun overhead and the scorching iron floor beneath, we were all but roasted.' He identified himself completely with the masses. He adopted the austerity of the poorest in India. The loin-cloth became his only dress. This man of lofty soul and tremendous moral force was appropriately called Mahatma Gandhi by his countrymen. Never after the Buddha had a greater soul trod on Indian soil.

A man of peace and non-violence, Gandhi descended on the Indian political scene with thunder and lightning, portending the coming of storms and upheavals. Men of acknowledged intellect, who were leaders in their own right, became his humble followers. To the masses he was an angel.

15

Holocaust of 1919 and New Reforms

During the Home Rule Movement Gandhi was engaged in a different kind of public activity. At the Lucknow session of the Congress (1916) his attention was drawn by an agriculturist of Bihar to the miserable plight of the indigo-growing peasants of Champaran district. They were bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of their land with indigo for European planters. The 'legal' contracts were taken forcibly from the tenants for whom indigo-growing was not profitable. If ever they thought of withdrawing from it, they were beaten up and shut up in private prisons. Their cattle were impounded, their houses looted. Barbers and washermen were asked not to serve them. Even ingress and egress to their own houses were stopped. They were no better than serfs. The planters extorted a large number of unauthorized perquisites—there were over 50 levies. For example, there was a tax on marriage, a tax on the hearth, a tax on oil crusher. The planter's hill sojourn was financed by a special tax. The planter had his own court of law and imposed heavy fines on his tenants; Government officers were under his influence. This exploitation had gone on for many decades, and none had ever cared to take up the sufferers' cause. One of the cultivators, believing that Gandhi was a practical friend of the poor, approached him and got a promise from him.

Gandhi proceeded to Champaran to make inquiries. The first man he met in Champaran was the secretary of the Planters' Association who arrogantly told him that he was an outsider and had 'no business to come between the planters and their tenants'. Next he saw the Commissioner of Tirhut Division (of which Champaran was a district), who, to quote

Gandhi, 'proceeded to bully me and advised me forthwith to leave Tirhut.' Gandhi ignored the advice and started with his co-workers towards his destination. On the way the superintendent of police served on him a notice, asking him to leave Champaran. He again refused to comply with the order, and was thereupon given a summons to take his trial the next day for disobeying the order. But at the trial Gandhi was informed that 'the Lieutenant-Governor had ordered the case to be withdrawn.' And the Collector of the district wrote to Gandhi saying that he was at liberty to conduct the inquiry and that he might count on whatever help he needed from the officials. The inquiry began and so did Gandhi's social work—opening schools for the tenants' children and giving lectures to the people. The Government of Bihar would not like Gandhi's influence to grow in that province, and the Governor wrote to him warning him that his inquiry had been sufficiently prolonged and that he should now leave Bihar. He declined to leave saying that the inquiry was bound to be prolonged. The Government was anxious to avoid creating a situation that might, during the war, kick up undesirable repercussions and appointed an official inquiry committee with Gandhi as one of the members. The committee produced a favourable report. The contract system was abolished, and the planters were asked to refund 'a portion of the exactions made by them which the committee had found to be unlawful.'

The second movement under his leadership took place in Kheda district of Gujerat. 'A condition approaching famine had arisen in the Kheda district owing to a widespread failure of crops,' and the cultivators were not in a position to pay revenues. Under the Land Revenue Rules tenants were entitled to full suspension of the revenue in case three-fourths of their crops had been destroyed. In making asessments on such occasions the officials usually erred against the tenants, and seldom did they benefit by the provision in the rules. This time Gandhi appeared on the scene, and he was assured that the tenants' contention was right and that of the officials wrong. And when all appeals for suspension proved ineffective, he called upon the tenants not to pay Government dues and take the consequences. He drafted a pledge and had it

signed by them: 'We, the undersigned, hereby solemnly declare that we shall not, of our own accord, pay to the Government the full or the remaining revenue for the year. We shall let the Government take whatever legal steps it may think fit and gladly suffer the consequences of our non-payment. We shall rather let our lands be forfeited than that by voluntary payment we should allow our case to be considered false or should compromise our self-respect. Should the Government however agree to suspend collection of the second instalment of the assessment throughout the district, such amongst us as are in a position to pay will pay up the whole or the balance of the revenue that may be due. The reason why those who are able to pay still withhold payment is that if they pay up, the poorer ryots may in a panic sell their chattels or incur debts to pay their dues and thereby bring suffering upon themselves. In these circumstances we feel that for the sake of the poor, it is the duty even of those who can afford to pay to withhold payment of their assessment.'

The Government stuck to its resolve and proceeded to make collections by force. Property, cattle and standing crops were attached. 'This', to quote Gandhi, 'unnerved the peasants, some of whom paid up their dues while others desired to place safe movables in the way of the officials so that they might attach them to realize the dues. On the other hand some were prepared to fight to the bitter end.' But 'the campaign came to an unexpected end. It was clear that the people were exhausted, and I hesitated to let the unbending be driven to utter ruin.' Simultaneously came the Government decision that if the well-to-do peasants paid Government dues, the poor ones would be granted suspension.' 'Although', Gandhi goes on to say, 'the termination was celebrated as a triumph of satyagraha, I could not enthuse over it as it lacked the essentials of a complete triumph. The end of a satyagraha campaign can be celebrated as worthy only when it leaves the satyagrahis stronger and more spirited than they are in the beginning.' But he claimed it as marking 'the beginning of an awakening among the peasants of Gujarat, the beginning of their true political education.'

The only effect the political education of those days had

was anti-Government feeling, and Kheda produced it in abundance. Some time later when Gandhi, being an unconditional supporter of the war effort, went to Kheda to help in raising recruits, he was faced with a wholly different situation. He himself says: 'Whereas during the revenue campaign the people readily offered their carts free of charge and two volunteers came forth when one was needed, it was difficult now to get a cart even on hire, to say nothing of volunteers. We decided to dispense with the use of carts and to do our journey on foot.... We had meetings wherever we went. People did attend, but hardly one or two would offer themselves as recruits. "You are a votary of Ahimsa (non-violence); how can you ask us to take up arms? What good has Government done for India to deserve our co-operation?" These and similar questions used to be put to us.'

Not only Kheda but the entire country was in a state of distress. The people were unwillingly submitting to their exploitation for the war effort. The poor—and they constituted the bulk of the population—were sagging under the weight of ever-mounting taxation. They met Government demands helplessly, knowing full well that India had no need to be involved in the war and that it was being fought for the preservation of the British Empire. When the taxation reached the limit, currency inflation was resorted to. Then appeared the price spiral rising quickly month after month, making the poor more miserable. They were sandwiched between the Government and big business, the latter also claiming a share in the exploitation. The mills were making enormous profits, but the owners would not pay the workers adequately; at one time Gandhi himself had to lead a strike. Cases of looting increased, and many people felt insecure. The economic distress was aggravated by a series of epidemics. First came plague in July 1917 taking a toll of 800,000 lives. Next summer influenza mortality came like a challenge to the mass killing on the war fronts. Over six million people perished in five months. Then there were excessive rains resulting not only in loss of crops but a virulent type of cholera and malaria. It was estimated that between 50 and 80 per cent of the population was affected by the epidemics. The heavy downpour was followed next year (1918-1919) by

severe drought. 'There was no province which did not suffer from a shortage of monsoon either partial or complete, with the result that the crop failure of 1918-19 was one of the worst on record in the previous decade.'

In the sphere of politics, justice had been subordinated to expediency because of Government anxiety to destroy all traces of the revolutionary tendency. The case of Mrs. Sindhubala Dasi, a village woman of Bankura District in Bengal, may be cited as an illustration. A slip of paper containing Sindhubala's address happened to be found in the papers of a 'dangerous' revolutionary. Police carried out a search but found no trace of the woman of that name in the house. But they discovered that another woman, wife of a different man, bore the same name. That hint was enough for them, and they took her into custody. Surrounded by policemen, she was so much terrified that on questioning she told the superintendent of police that the name of her brother's wife was also Sindhubala and that she was living in another village. The second Sindhubala was also arrested, and the two women were marched on foot to the police station. They were remanded to custody for a fortnight, but since they had absolutely no connection with any revolutionary and there was no evidence against them, they were let off because a prosecution would only bring the judge's strictures against the police. The matter stirred the conscience of the people. Protest meetings were held and a protest motion was moved in the Bengal Legislative Council also. This was one of the most glaring cases of abuse of power. In other cases, thousands of people were beaten and harassed merely on suspicion of having connection with terrorists.

British arrogance (which, at least in India, always betrayed lack of culture) showed no signs of relenting; it may be illustrated by two examples of the war period. In 1917 Sir Subrahmania Aiyer had, in a letter to President Wilson of the U.S.A., offered to raise ten million men for the war if India was promised political freedom. The letter contained a paragraph about conditions in India: 'Permit me to add that you and the other leaders have been kept in ignorance of the full measure of misrule and oppression in India. Officials of an alien nation,

speaking a foreign language, force their will upon us; they grant themselves exorbitant salaries and large allowances; they refuse us education; they rob us of our wealth; they impose crushing taxes without our consent; they cast thousands of our people into prisons for uttering patriotic sentiments; prisons are so filthy that often the inmates die from loathsome diseases.' This letter was characterised by the Secretary of State as 'disgraceful', and he and the Viceroy personally rebuked Aiyer when he called on them. He returned dejected and renounced his title.

There was no political provocation in the other example. Hasan Imam, a former judge of the Patna High Court and president of the special session of the Congress (1918), was travelling in a first class compartment. On a wayside station a Government officer of the Indian Civil Service boarded the train and entered the same compartment. The sight of an Indian in a first class compartment offended him and he sat down on Hasan Imam's chest. Imam was abused when he protested against this beastly behaviour.

The Imam incident was no part of British policy but that of Aiyer was—the policy was to suppress political movements by laws, which by any criterion offended against the fundamental rights enjoyed by people in civilized countries. During the war a certain amount of tolerance was shown to constitutional agitations for obvious reasons; but it could well be anticipated that after the end of the hostilities, even the supporters of the war effort could throw their weight on the side of the agitation. Therefore the Government of India appointed (in December 1917) a committee, under the chairmanship of a British Judge, 'to investigate and report on the nature and criminal conspiracies of the revolutionary movements in India.' (The committee was commonly known as the Rowlatt Committee after the chairman's name.) The committee was ostensibly to deal with the revolutionary movements, but as became evident subsequently, it was to suggest measures to deal with the entire political agitation, whether revolutionary or constitutional. The Congress of 1917 apprehended (in a resolution) that the purpose of the committee 'is not to give relief but to introduce fresh legislation arming the Executive with

additional powers to deal with the alleged revolutionary conspiracy in Bengal.' The Defence of India Act, which virtually suspended the principle of British jurisprudence and gave the bureaucracy sweeping powers, was to expire, according to the provision made in it, six months after the end of the war. The Government wanted the extraordinary powers to continue and to enact possibly more stringent laws to take the place of the Defence of India Act. The Government correctly visualised the volume of the post-war agitation; the proposals for new reforms had been derided as unsatisfactory by the extremists, and ignored by the terrorists, and both would do their utmost to harm the administrative machinery and incite the people against the British.

The Rowlatt Committee suggested two kinds of measures, punitive and preventive. It said that provision should be made for the trial of seditious crime by Benches of three Judges without juries and assessors and without preliminary commitment proceedings or appeal. The preventive measures *inter alia* proposed (1) to restrict residence, (2) to require that the person should periodically report to the police, (3) to arrest anybody without any cause shown, (4) to confine in non-penal custody. It was also recommended that 'dangerous persons' detained under the Defence of India Act should continue to be detained after the expiry of the Act. (The number of detenues ran into four figures.)

In January 1919 the Government announced its decision to proceed with the legislation recommended by the Rowlatt Committee on the opening day of the February session of the Imperial Legislative Council. Public opinion was unanimously against the proposed legislation; even the moderates had declared against it. Gandhi was seriously ill, in his own words 'near death's door'. When he was recuperating he happened casually to read in the papers the Rowlatt report. Its recommendations startled him. 'Something must be done,' he told his co-worker, Vallabhbhai Patel. He suggested: 'If even a handful of men can be found to sign the pledge of resistance and the proposed measure is passed in defiance of it, we ought to offer satyagraha at once. If I am not laid up like this, I should give battle against it all alone and expect others to

follow suit. But in my present helpless condition I feel myself to be altogether unequal to the task.'

Gandhi was soon equal to the task. As in the past, the new movement too was to be outside the Congress; Gandhi's reason was: 'As all hope of any of the existing institutions adopting a novel weapon like satyagraha seemed to me to be in vain, a separate body called the Satyagraha Sabha was established at my instance. Its principal members were drawn from Bombay where, therefore, its headquarters were fixed. The intending covenanters began to sign the satyagraha pledge in large numbers; bulletins were issued and popular meetings began to be held everywhere recalling all the familiar features of the Kheda campaign.' By his colleagues Gandhi was chosen to be president of the Sabha.

On March 18 he published a pledge signed by numerous persons. It said: 'Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills known as the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Bill No. 1 of 1919 and the Criminal Law Emergency Powers Bill No. 2 of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of an individual on which the safety of India as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as the Committee, hereafter to be appointed, may think fit, and we further affirm that in the struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property.' Gandhi addressed private and open letters to the Viceroy telling him that if Government did not alter its mind, satyagraha was the only course left to him. The Viceroy did not yield.

He proclaimed March 30 as the day of general closing of shops, suspension of all business activity, fasting, prayers and meetings all over the country. For some reason the day was subsequently advanced to April 6. The moderates disapproved the move, and Mrs. Besant advised Gandhi to abandon it. For Gandhi there was no going back. 'The whole of India from one end to the other, towns as well as villages, observed complete hartal' on April 6. But Delhi celebrated it on March 30, the wire about the change of date reaching there too late.

With complete Hindu-Muslim unity Delhi had never witnessed a hartal like that before. Swami Shraddhanand and Hakim Ajmal Khan were its organizers. To demonstrate Hindu-Muslim unity, Shraddhanand was invited to the Muslim mosque (Jama Masjid) to deliver a speech. The most imposing part of the protest demonstration in Delhi was the huge procession parading the main thoroughfares. As it was wending its way towards the railway station, it was asked by the police to disperse and on its refusal to do so was fired on. Despite casualties and the fear of a repetition of firing, a large crowd again assembled outside the station. After a scuffle with the railway contractor who had not closed his business and after two of the leaders of the procession had been arrested, the mob invaded the station. A party of British infantry was called out, and the crowd was fired on several times. The number of persons killed and injured was quite heavy.

In Bombay too the day's demonstration began with an exhibition of Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhi and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu addressing a gathering in a Muslim mosque. The programme of hartal was extended to defiance of such laws as adversely affected the masses. One of these laws was the salt law— a tax in respect of which 'a powerful movement had been for some time past going on to secure its repeal.' Gandhi suggested that 'the people might prepare salt from sea-water in their own houses in disregard of the law'. He also gave a call for the sale of proscribed political literature. Two of his own books, *Sarvodaya* (Gujarati adaptation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*) and *Hind Swaraj*, which had been proscribed, came handy for this purpose. Says Gandhi: 'To print and sell them openly seemed to be the easiest way of offering civil disobedience. A sufficient number of copies of the books was therefore printed, and it was arranged to sell them at the end of the monster meeting that was to be held that evening after the breaking of the fast. On the evening of the 6th, an army of volunteers issued forth accordingly with this prohibited literature to sell it among the people. All the copies were soon sold out. The proceeds of the sale were to be utilized for furthering the civil disobedience campaign.' The books were priced at four annas per copy but quite a large number of people paid all the money they had in

their pockets for their copies. In one case a single copy was purchased for Rs. 50. The public zeal was circumvented by a Government announcement to the effect that the new edition of the proscribed books had not been proscribed. 'This news caused general disappointment.'

On the night of April 7, Gandhi left for Delhi and Amritsar. Next day, as the train reached Palwal railway station (near Mathura), he was served with a written order prohibiting him from entering the boundary of the Punjab as his presence there was, it was stated, likely to result in breach of the peace. He was asked by the police to get down. He refused to do so saying, 'I want to go to the Punjab in response to a pressing invitation, not to foment unrest but to allay it. I am therefore sorry that it is not possible for me to comply with this order.' He was taken out of the train, put under police custody, and sent to Bombay, where he was set free.

But the news of his arrest reached Bombay while he was yet in the train. There was considerable excitement with crowds moving in the streets. Before anything untoward could happen, he reached Bombay and calmed the crowds. Addressing them he said: 'Satyagraha is essentially a weapon of the truthful. A satyagrahi is pledged to non-violence, and unless people observe it in thought, word and deed, I cannot offer mass satyagraha.' But in Ahmedabad the news of the arrest caused havoc. An unfounded rumour got currency that Anasuyabehn, a social worker enjoying high esteem, had also been arrested. The mill hands got wild and set fire to several Government offices, cut telegraph wires, and assaulted Europeans. In the neighbourhood a train carrying troops was derailed. Crowds moved about as if in anarchy; they were repeatedly fired upon. The number of dead was estimated to be 28 and of injured 123; another estimate gave higher figures. In Viramgam a Government officer was murdered. Ahmedabad was put under martial law and an atmosphere of terror was created. Gandhi was not happy at the exhibition of violence by the people, and declared penitential fast of three days for himself, and appealed to the people to go on a similar fast for a day. The peace returned, and martial law was withdrawn on April 13.

But this was not the end. There was full-blooded violence

in the Punjab, a tragedy the like of which had no parallel in recent times. Incredible as it may seem, the Punjab had the autocratic rule of a Governor; unlike other provinces there was no executive council. Until 1920 the Congress went on expressing the hope every year that the Punjab would be given an executive council and an expanded legislative council. The request was never heeded. A British civilian has in his book described the then Punjab thus: 'We were taught in the Punjab to have an iron hand in a velvet glove; a firm rule, soft words, and conciliation. No bullying, no favouritism.'[1] At the time of the hartal movement Sir Michael O'Dwyer was Governor of the Punjab; the treatment he chose to put down unrest was different from the one prescribed above. He mocked at the political aspirations of the people; he was for ruthless suppression of political activities. He would not let men like Tilak and Pal enter the Punjab. The Punjab was a paradox. On the one hand it alone supplied more than half the Indian recruits to the army and was 'the only great province which made a really serious war effort,'[2] on the other, it had been one of the storm centres of revolutionary activities.

A little probing provides a clue to the paradox. According to the evidence collected by the Punjab Inquiry Committee of the Congress (appointed to make inquiries into the events being narrated here), tyrannical methods were employed in making recruitment. A typical example is of a revenue officer (Tehsildar), who used to prepare a list of all men in a village and ask each family of three or four brothers to provide one or two recruits for the war. If the fixed number was not made available voluntarily, he would resort to cruel punishment. He made the men stand naked in the presence of their women folk or pushed them between thorny bushes. Women were taken as hostages and retained until the men came forward to enlist in the army. His methods, in Michael O'Dwyer's own words, 'amounted almost to conscription'. This officer was later murdered by the villagers. As Mrs. Besant observed, 'the harsh and oppressive rule of

[1] R. Needham Cust, *Memoirs of Past Years* (privately printed), p. 72 quoted in Edward Thompson, *The Reconstruction of India*, p. 105

[2] O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, p. 276

Sir Michael O' Dwyer, his press-gang methods of recruitment, his forced war loans, and his cruel persecution of all political leaders kept the covered-up embers of resentment alive and ready to break into flames. At the special Congress of 1918 in Bombay, Punjab delegates told us how they were living over a volcano, which any act of exceptional tyranny might cause to burst out.'[3]

This warning seemed at first unwarranted. The April 6 hartal and meetings passed off peacefully at Amritsar, Lahore and other places. But the volcano was bound to burst out, and it did. On the morning of April 10 the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar issued orders, apparently in a state of over-anxiety, for the deportation of two renowned leaders, Dr. Satyapal and Dr. S. Kitchlew, from Amritsar and their internment in the town of Dharamsala. By 11.30 a.m. the news became known throughout the city. Self-appointed leaders appeared in the streets and asked the people to suspend their business. The advice was an echo of the people's own feeling, and first there was hartal and then there was a surging crowd in the bazaars. The only slogan the people repeatedly raised was, 'we must have the two leaders back in our midst'. And peacefully—they carried no sticks, no lathis—they proceeded towards the Deputy Commissioner's residence to address the slogan to him. On the way the peace was broken by police. The obstinate crowd was asked to return, and on its refusal was attacked with bullets. The crowd was thus forcibly returned, and on the return journey its mental state was wholly different. In a revengeful mood the infuriated mob brutally assaulted any European, man or woman, it met in the way. It sacked the National Bank and the Alliance Bank, set afire their premises, and killed their European managers and two other Europeans. The Town Hall and a number of other public buildings were gutted. Telegraph wires were pulled down. Miss Sherwood, a Christian missionary, was done to death.

Then followed official reprisals, including one of the grimmest tragedies of Indian history. Troops were called out, and they opened fire indiscriminately unmindful of the deaths and in-

[3] Annie Besant, *The Future of Indian Politics*, p. 236

juries they were causing. Armoured cars and aeroplanes were used to disperse the mob. On the night of the 11th General Dwyer, who commanded the sub-district under General Beynon, arrived and took command of the troops in the city. On the 12th there was a round-up of people suspected of provoking trouble, many being taken into custody. All public gatherings and meetings were banned. This proclamation was read out in some parts of the city, but in many others it was not.[4] So far as the people were concerned, they were dominated by a spirit to assert their human rights and to refuse to be treated like animals. A public meeting was announced by political leaders for 4.30 p.m. on the 13th. Both General Dwyer and the civil authorities not only took no notice of this announcement but allowed people to assemble in the Jallianwala Bagh, an open space in the heart of the city, enclosed on three sides by high brick buildings and approachable only on one side by a narrow passage. When some 20,000 people (according to Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the author of the *History of the Congress*) 'had gathered in the Bagh and while one of the leaders, Hansraj, was speaking, Dwyer entered with about 50 British and one hundred Indian troops, and without a word of warning they opened fire at about 100 yards range upon a dense crowd.... The panic-stricken multitude broke at once, but for ten consecutive minutes he kept up a merciless fusillade—in all 1,650 rounds—on that seething mass of humanity caught like rats in the trap, vainly rushing for the few narrow exits or lying flat on the ground to escape the rain of bullets which he personally directed to the points where the crowd was the thickest.'[5] The firing was made by the Indian troops behind whom were placed the British rifles. It continued for ten minutes and stopped only when ammunition had exhausted. Dwyer said he would have fired and fired longer if he had more ammunition. According to an eye-witness account recorded by the Congress Inquiry Committee, the number of those killed was 'not less than 1,000'; according to the (official) Disorders Enquiry Committee, better known as the Hunter Committee, the num-

[4] The Disorders Inquiry Committee Report, p. 30

[5] Valentine Chirol, *India, Old and New*, p. 178

ber of dead was 379 and of wounded 1,200. Later Government was prepared to accept the figure given by the Seva Samiti, which had counted 500 bodies. The wounded were, under General Dwyer's orders, left there groaning the whole night without water and medical aid. Dwyer himself said that his purpose 'was to strike terror into the whole of the Punjab'.

Another thing that assured him the place of a satan in history was his 'crawling order'. To avenge Miss Sherwood's murder, he promulgated an order requiring every passerby in the lane in which she was killed not to walk erect but to crawl on his belly.

Other methods of striking terror were not so novel, though quite tyrannous. Flogging and whipping was freely resorted to; there were indiscriminate arrests and confiscations. An order of the martial law administration prohibited sale of third class tickets which meant virtually stopping Indians from railway travelling. All bicycles other than those belonging to Europeans were commandeered. Shopkeepers were forced to resume business under threat of severe penalties; there were cases in which punishments were actually awarded. A public platform for whipping was erected and a number of triangles for the same purpose were put up in different parts of the city. The martial law commissioners tried 298 people on major charges and sentenced 51 to death, 46 to transportation for life and 115 to various terms of imprisonment.

Martial law was clamped on five other districts of the Punjab, where too official atrocities were let loose. Let us take Lahore first. As soon as the news of Gandhi's arrest reached Lahore on April 10, a procession with a black flag proceeded along the main bazaar of the city. As usual it was asked by the authorities to disperse, and on the people ignoring the order they were fired upon. There was another firing on April 12 to disperse a crowd which had gathered in a public road. Then, as if by design, the district magistrate took the same initiative as his counterpart in Amritsar had done: some leading men were taken into custody. The result also was the same—it should have been, perhaps may have been, anticipated.

There was universal excitement, and yet there was no out-

burst; a safe course of resorting to hartal was adopted. The authorities were panicky. They had the shops forcibly opened. Lawyers, their agents and touts were ordered to get themselves registered and not to leave the city without permit. The occupants of the buildings on which martial law notices were pasted were required to protect them under pain of punishment. More than two persons were not allowed to walk abreast on the side walks. Public kitchens were closed. Students were asked to report themselves four times daily at a place several miles away from their colleges. In the burning sun of April, when the temperature was often over 108 in the shade, these youths were made to walk daily 19 miles to and fro. Some of them fainted on the wayside. A martial law notice pasted on a wall of the Sanatan Dharma College was removed by someone. For this the whole of the professional staff and all the students numbering about 500 were arrested and marched under military escort to the fort where they were detained in military custody for three days and given inhuman treatment. Motor cars, motor bicycles, electric fans, etc. belonging to Indians were commandeered for the martial law troops. The drivers of public carriers were ordered to present their vehicles at police stations three or four times every day so that they might not participate in the hartal. Flogging was a common punishment. How was the flogging done? The headman of a village, to give an example, was tied to a tree and publicly flogged for the edification of the village. An example may also be given of how the martial law was enforced. There was a Mohammedan marriage arranged in a village not far from Lahore. The whole marriage party, including the bridegroom, the priests and the guests, were flogged for the 'offence' of assembling together during the martial law regime.

The next victim was the town of Kasur, which observed hartal on April 11 and 12. On the 12th the people organized a liberty procession which, after parading the main thoroughfares, reached the railway station. Here the crowd became unmanageable, broke doors, threw stones at the windows, burnt an oilshed, damaged signal and telegraph wires, smashed a quantity of furniture and looted the railway ticket office.

While this was going on a train, which had some European passengers steamed in. The crowd fell upon the train and manhandled the Europeans. The Europeans were persuaded by Indian passengers to leave the train, which they did. But two of them, who refused to leave, fired upon the crowd. The crowd answered the fire by a volley of stones with which the two Europeans were done to death.

Now the police arrived and began at once firing on the crowd. To disperse the crowd was the bounden duty of the authorities, but their subsequent behaviour leads one to the conclusion that they were in a bitter revengeful mood. A large number of persons—even those not present in the crowd—were arrested; and the whole male population of the town was paraded for identification. People were in terror of being flogged on any pretext. Captain Doveton, who had been put in independent command of the Kasur sub-division, invented some punishments to terrorise the people. In one case a wedding party was flogged in the presence of prostitutes. One of his 'mild' punishments was that he would order his victims to touch the ground with their foreheads. He had the prisoners made naked to the knees, tied them to telegraph poles or triangles, and flogged them in public. Another officer, Lt. Col. MacRae, had school boys flogged in public in order to set an example for others. 'The bigger boys were picked out at random, perhaps because they could bear the whipping better.' All the male inhabitants, boys and men, ten thousand in number, had to present themselves for identification parade. The arrested persons, about 150, were put in a cage placed on the station platform.

At Gujranwala the trouble was sparked off by a mischief supposedly wrought by some diabolical underling of Government. On two railway bridges, a slaughtered calf (offensive to Hindu susceptibilities) and a slaughtered pig (offensive to Muslims) were found hung up on April 14. Such a sight was enough to provoke members of the two communities to come to blows and stage a riot. The device failed to break the strong bond of unity recently fostered, and men of the two communities said to each other that the animals had been killed and exposed on the bridges by the police with a mischievous

motive. There was no doubt some excitement, but it was against Government. Hindus and Muslims gathered together and set the bridges ablaze. Police firing on the crowd had the effect of further excitement, and later the men set several Government buildings on fire—the tehsil office, the dak bungalow, the district court, the railway station, etc. In the afternoon aeroplanes were requisitioned from Lahore, and Gujranwala was bombed. According to the Royal Air Force men's own admission (before the Hunter Committee), the bombing was indiscriminate. A bomb was dropped on a group of men peacefully listening to the speech of someone. A party of twenty peasants working quietly in a field was machine-gunned.

Gujranwala's Martial Law Administrator, Col. O'Brien, followed the usual methods of his counterparts. He issued an order requiring Indians to alight from their carriages when they came across British officers and salute them. Those who ignored the order or accidentally failed to observe it were whipped, fined or punished by other methods. Arrest and imprisonment without trial was an ordinary affair. In one case some leading citizens were arrested, marched several miles in the burning sun, thrust into a goods truck and despatched to Lahore. On the way they were not allowed even to answer calls of nature. In this plight they had to pass 44 hours. The Hindu-Muslim unity was made ludicrous by chaining Hindus and Muslims together in pairs.

The summary courts set up for the duration of the martial law convicted 200 persons and sentenced them to whipping and various terms of imprisonment. The Martial Law Commission convicted 149 persons of whom 22 were sentenced to death, 108 to transportation for life, and others to long terms. The last act of O'Brien's rule is not less notable. When the martial law was about to expire (after 24 hours) he rushed a large number of cases through summary courts and secured their conviction without any show of trial.

In Sheikhupura the martial law was enforced without any cause. Bosworth-Smith, a civilian officer, who was in administrative charge of Sheikhupura, admitted that martial law was not necessary in this town. But Smith's chastisement of students would be repulsive to a man of the 20th century. He

compelled school boys, including children of five or six years of age, to parade thrice every day to salute the Union Jack. They had to cover a long distance in the heat of burning sun; and several of them succumbed to the torture. The boys were made to say and repeat, 'I have committed no offence. I will not commit any offence. I repent, I repent, I repent.' Smith had suggested a 'House of Repentence' to be constructed, but the suggestion did not materialise.

There were rebellious outbursts in several other places in the Punjab. At Wazirabad several bridges and a missionary's house were burnt and telegraph offices destroyed. At Malakwal a railway train was derailed, resulting in two deaths. At Gujrat the excitement was quelled by repeated firings. The whole of the Punjab was in a mood to revolt; even villages were affected. Millions of posters and handbills were distributed asking the people to act. One of the posters pertinently quoted by the Hunter Committee said: 'Blessed be Mahatma Gandhi. We are the sons of India. We shall not give way. We shall lose our lives. We shall never abide by the Rowlatt Bill. Gandhi! we, the Indians, will fight to the death after you. The flag of cruelty and oppression has been fixed in the ground. Alas, British, how you have cheated us.... You have fired on Indians and shot them to death.... The treatment meted out to our girls at Amritsar is unbearable.... There are many English ladies here to dishonour.'

There was another variety of activity side by side. On April 10 endeavours were started to bring about a strike of the railway staff, first at Lahore and then in the whole of the Punjab. 'While Lahore city was in the hands of the rebels,' says Lieut. General Sir George MacMunn, 'an Indian railway signaller sent a message to his friends in Delhi to the effect that Lahore city was in the hands of the mob, that the Indian troops were about to mutiny, that the Indian portion of the railway staff of the great north-western strategic railway were about to strike and that all the great railway staffs in the south should also do so. Two days later the leaders of the rebellion at Delhi sent the following message to all their railway co-adjutors: "On receiving the word 'Rowlatt', Indian soldiers in the Punjab as well as the employees of the East India, the Oudh

and Rohilkhand Railways have decided to strike. Telegraph to the Great Indian Peninsula and Bengal-Nagpur Railways to do the needful at once." This message was intercepted at several places. At Bina it was placed in the hands of the Quartermaster General in India. He was on tour and at once proceeded on an engine to give information to Government. On April 13 this message was put on the wires: "All the southern railways were to leave work tonight, and Gandhi had been arrested.—From Indian brothers.'[6] Though the authorities had received timely information of the projected strike and taken steps to avert it, the strike actually commenced at several places, the object being to make it impossible for the troops to be moved. Up to the end of April only a restricted railway service was possible and that too largely with the help of the Anglo-Indian staff.

Gandhi was prohibited from entering the Punjab. Several times he asked for permission but was each time told by the Viceroy, 'not yet'. Gandhi did not want to complicate the situation by violating the prohibitory order: he did not like violence and incendiarism displayed by the people. C. F. Andrews, a European missionary and Gandhi's close associate in South Africa, who was not stopped, was arrested and deported when he started an inquiry into Punjab affairs. Barrister Eardly Norton, a famous Congressman, who was anxious to offer legal advice to the victims in jail, was also served with a prohibitory order. He would have done pretty little because the rule of law had been suspended and the prisoners were not allowed to choose their own counsel. B. G. Horniman, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, who had earnesty taken up the cause of Punjab victims in his paper, was deported and the paper suppressed. A rigorous censorship was imposed on the news relating to the Punjab, and the traffic was put under strict control in order to isolate the province from the rest of the country. The events were shocking, and the Government was alienating the help of its best friends. Sir Sankaran Nair, an Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council,

[6] Lieut. General Sir George MacMunn, *Turmoil & Tragedy in India, 1914 and After*, p. 175

expressed himself against the continuing martial law and resigned his membership in protest. The poet, Sir Rabindranath Tagore, renounced his kinghthood. Writing to the Government of India, he said: 'The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context by humiliation, and I, for my part, wish to stand shorn of all special distinction by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.'

The Congress was a helpless victim of the great tragedy. The All-India Congress Committee met in April, then in June, and again in July, but was apparently not in a position to make itself heard. By the April meeting a decision was taken to send two leaders, Vithalbhai Patel and N. C. Kelkar, to England to acquaint the British people and Government with the actual situation in India. At the time of the June meeting of the committee, a large number of people, sentenced to death, were waiting to be hanged. The committee asked the British Government to order suspension of the sentences until an inquiry was held into the martial regime. There was no response. The July meeting appointed a Congress inquiry committee (consisting of Shraddhanand, Motilal Nehru and Madan Mohan Malaviya) directing them to make an on-the-spot inquiry into the Punjab happenings. It also decided to hold the 1919 Congress at Amritsar, where the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy was enacted.

Gandhi never anticipated that the protest day would lead to violence as it did in the Punjab. All that he sought to create was a consciousness against the Rowlatt Bills and a determination to fight such measures peacefully in a spirit of non-cooperation. A persistent spirit of non-cooperation against an unwanted government is always better, much better than a momentary anger and its outburst with which the obstinacy is also likely to burst out. In most places, where the day was observed, the programme went on according to the plan, and there the satyagraha spirit grew enduringly. But the Punjab had embers under what appeared to be cold ashes. During the war itself thousands of Punjabis, returning from abroad, had spread revolutionary ideas, which got impetus from the practical experience of recruitment under conditions of oppression. A

recruit, when he became a soldier bound in army discipline, fought in the traditional loyal way, but he left a trail of bitterness in the repulsive surroundings from which he was picked up. And since the recruitment was made extensively, there was repulsion all around in the Punjab. But, as stated above, Gandhi wanted sustenance and not explosion, and on July 21 he suspended the anti-Rowlatt Bill movement. He went further in pursuance of his policy and principle, and asked the Congress (in December 1919) to pass a resolution condemning the mob violence. The resolution was thrown out, and he rose to announce that if the position he had taken up was not acceptable to the Congress, he would not remain in it. He had his way. The resolution then adopted said that the Congress, 'while recognizing the grave provocation that led to a sudden outburst of mob frenzy, expresses its deep regret at, and its condemnation of the excesses committed in certain parts of the Punjab and Gujerat resulting in loss of life and injury to person and property during the month of April.'

But Government was in no mood to listen to reason. At the persistent demand of the leaders, it appointed a committee to inquire into Punjab holocaust but soon robbed it of its purpose by passing a law indemnifying the officers whose conduct the committee was asked to investigate. Another action sabotaging the committee was the rejection of the Congress demand to allow martial law prisoners to appear before the committee. The Congress therefore set up, as already stated, its own committee. It consisted of Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Abbas Tyebji, Fazl-ul-Huq, and M. R. Jayakar. In contents its report was very different from that of the Government committee. The trend of official evidence even before the Government committee was that the martial law was not required to meet the immediate necessities of the administration and that the martial law was resorted to merely to strike terror into the hearts of the people in order to avoid possible trouble in the future.

In Britain, though the will to retain the empire was still quite strong, the realization had already been dawning on the rulers that institutions, resembling Parliament to some extent, would have to be established in India so that the people might look upon them as hope of Home Rule in the near future.

Announcement had already been made in 1917 and 1918; and in December 1919 a Royal proclamation was made announcing the new reforms. For the first time the centre and the provinces were to have legislatures with a majority of elected members, though the franchise was narrow and possession of property was the qualification of a voter. Like Parliament the centre got a bicameral legislature—the Council of State (upper house) and the Legislative Assembly (lower house). The Council of State was to consist of 60 members, 24 elected members and not more than 20 officials. The Legislative Assembly, with a membership of 140, would have 105 elected members and 26 nominated officials and 14 nominated non-officials. It was a 'Parliament' with a Government appointed by the King of England and not responsible to it! And it was a 'Parliament' with no control over the purse! Yet it was to grow, with the struggle for freedom, into a full-fledged Parliament as India has today.

In the provincial legislatures (as already stated in a previous chapter), a few members (nearly half) of the Government belonged to the elected part of the legislature, but they were appointed by the Governors. The legislatures exercised authority over the expenditure pertaining to the subjects administered by the elected members in the Government.

The reforms naturally came up for discussion before the Congress, which met shortly after the announcement at Amritsar. The Congress was divided into two camps, one demanding outright rejection of the reforms and the other, though it conceded that they were not satisfactory, was for acceptance. Gandhi belonged to the latter group and so did men like Malaviya and Jinnah. An amendment to the resolution, which was acceptable to both the groups, avoided bitter discussions. It said that 'pending such introduction' (establishment of full responsible government), 'this Congress trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the reforms as to secure an early establishment of full responsible government.'

The resolution however said that in view of the pronouncement of President Wilson, Lloyd George and other statesmen to ensure the future peace of the world the principle of self-determination should be applied to India as well. Tilak's voice

—he had since returned from England and was present at the session—was again dominant. He said speaking on the resolution: 'We do not accept the Reforms Act. We are not satisfied with it. The Act says that after ten years the operation of the Act will be reviewed and some other steps may be taken. We do not want to wait for ten years. We want to continue our agitation for full responsible government and shall not be satisfied with the few crumbs thrown to us in order to satisfy our hunger for the time being. Our hunger is not satisfied. We are not going to be content with the single morsel which has been given to us. We are fit to have full responsible government just now. And if we are fit just now, why should we wait for ten years? We will work the Act for the purpose of securing full responsible government.' He read out a resolution which had been adopted at a mass meeting of British citizens in London while he was there. It said: 'This meeting of British citizens, holding that the existence of the British Commonwealth is dependent upon a right of self-determination being conferred on the nations within its boundary, hereby declares that the Indian people are entitled to receive at the earliest opportunity the full right of self-determination.' The campaign in England was a vital part of the freedom movement, and the Congress appointed a committee with Tilak as its convener charging it with the task of establishing a propaganda mission in that country.

The next year's movement was again Gandhi's concern wholly. Tilak died before it came off.

16

Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-22

THE 1919 Congress had accepted the new reforms scheme and agreed to work it, but in 1920 what mainly engaged the attention of the leading politicians was not this but non-cooperation with Government. The beginning, which quickly grew to stature, had been made in 1919 itself. About the middle of that year some leading Muslims, apprehensive of the defeated Turkey being saddled with dishonourable peace terms, formed themselves into a Khilafat Conference and asked the people to observe October 27 as Khilafat Day. They called a joint conference of Muslims and Hindus at Delhi for November 23 to deliberate on the Khilafat question. During the war Hindus and Muslims had demonstrated complete unity, which grew stronger in the post-war period; and therefore the readiness of Hindus to make common cause with Muslims was not surprising. The greatest event in Muslim history was that Gandhi was asked to preside over the Khilafat conference. Ever since his arrival in India after his South African satyagraha campaigns, Gandhi was, to use his own words, 'seeking the friendship of good Mussalmans and was eager to understand the Mussalman mind through contact with their purest and most patriotic representatives.' He 'had realized early enough in South Africa that there was no genuine friendship between Hindus and Muslims.'

To promote 'genuine friendship' became a mission of his life. He associated himself with Muslim leaders' concern for Turkey during the war and contributed his mite to the campaign made for the release of Muslims, mainly the Ali brothers, Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali, who had been arrested for their pro-Turkish attitude. He corresponded

with Government justifying the demand for the release of the Khilafat prisoners. He was a practical man. He saw that the Khilafat question had created an unprecedented awakening among Indian Muslims, an awakening which they were prepared to channel into nationalist directions and into a struggle which would eventually develop as a freedom movement. The obvious aim of any practical politician would be to establish Hindu-Muslim unity, which India had not known since the Revolt of 1857; the alternative to rejecting the Khilafat sentiment as a non-political religious affair and unworthy of association with the anti-British struggle for self-government would mean creating a schism wider than ever known before. The decade of the growth of Muslim consciousness had unmistakably suggested that so far as the Muslims were concerned, religion could not only not be divorced from politics but should in fact be one of the wheels of the political chariot. With this background before him Gandhi saw in the political situation, as it developed in 1919, the fulfilment of his life's mission. He told the first Khilafat conference, a joint audience of Muslims and Hindus: 'The Mussalmans have adopted a very important resolution. If the peace terms are unfavourable to them—which may God forbid—they will stop all co-operation with Government. It is an inalienable right of the people thus to withhold co-operation. We are not bound to retain Government titles and honours or to continue in Government service. If Government should betray us in a great cause like the Khilafat we could not do otherwise than non-co-operate.'

Muslim divines (the Ulema) were stirred by the new development in Indian politics. They organized themselves into a body called the All-India Jamiat-ul-Ulema, and said: The Ulema were accustomed to facing tyrants for truth and kept aloof from the loyalist Muslim politics; but now that there is a change for the better they would re-enter politics. Paradoxically the Ulema, who quoted the Koran even for regulating the secular life, came in closer contact with what had in the past been dubbed and rejected as Hindu politics.

The stage was now set for what Gandhi called the non-co-operation movement. Anybody acquainted with world events could see that the British Government, rather the Allies, would

not treat Turkey in the manner Indian Muslims desired. On March 10, 1920 Gandhi announced his non-co-operation programme: 'England cannot expect a meek submission by us to an unjust usurpation of rights which to Muslims means a matter of life and death. We may therefore begin at the top as well as at the bottom. Those who are holding offices of honour or emoluments ought to give them up. Those who belong to the menial service under Government should do likewise.'

The peace terms were eventually announced on May 14, and the state of suspense in India ended. How and when the movement should start was now the question. An intriguing problem of Indian politics was settled for good; the Congress, which had always discouraged agitational politics, was now to preside over the non-cooperation movement. No more would the so-called people's representative organization bear a complexion strikingly different from the awakened urge of the people. The process of bringing the Congress into the movement began with an invitation to the provincial Congress committees to express their views. With some of the committees favouring the movement and some opposing it, the matter was placed before a special session of the Congress in September at Calcutta. The main resolution of the session, after describing briefly the Khilafat issue and Punjab wrongs, said: 'This Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two aforementioned wrongs and that the only effectual means to vindicate honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of Swarajya. This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent non-cooperation inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established.'

The year's annual session (held in December at Nagpur) went further ahead and adopted the following resolution: 'Inasmuch as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion and inasmuch as Government consolidates its power through titles and honours bestowed on the people and through schools controlled by it, its law courts and its legislative councils, and inasmuch as

it is desirable in the prosecution of the movement to take the minimum risk and to call for the least sacrifice compatible with the attainment of the desired object, this Congress earnestly advises—

(a) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies;

(b) refusal to attend Government levees, durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials or in their honour;

(c) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in various provinces;

(d) gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants, and the establishment of private arbitration courts with their aid for the settlement of private disputes;

(e) refusal on the part of the military and clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia;

(f) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed Councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election;

(g) boycott of foreign goods.

To make the last clause practicable the resolution advised the adoption of swadeshi in piecegoods on a vast scale, and immediate stimulation of manufacture on a 'large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every house'.

Taking the Congress to the battlefield was Gandhi's job (though the ground had been prepared earlier by its conversion to extremism), and he accomplished it creditably. The section opposed to his resolution was quite influential and powerful. Among the leading men were Lajpat Rai, the president of the special session, and C. R. Das, an eminent lawyer of Bengal. The latter had brought a contingent of 250 delegates from East Bengal and Assam at his own expense, all determined to defeat Gandhi's resolution. But at the session Das was overwhelmed by Gandhi's advocacy and completely converted to his viewpoint, and so were all his followers.

The first effect of the publication of the resolution in the press fell on the elections to the reformed councils which were just to follow. There was an upheaval in the mental attitude of the people. All nationalist candidates, who had announced their candidature and were carrying on their election compaigns, withdrew from the contest. Nearly 80 per cent of the voters refrained from voting and in several places the ballot boxes remained empty. The Khilafat Conference, the Muslim League, and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema having also passed resolutions similar to that of the Congress and about a thousand Muslim divines of the country having issued a *fatwa* calling upon the Muslims to boycott the elections, Muslim voters responded to the boycott call quite as enthusiastically as did the Hindu voters.

The Khilafat issue was very much there in the country, but the struggle wore the complexion of a freedom struggle; its different manifestations were of that variety. The anti-Rowlatt Bill agitation had made Gandhi's name a household word throughout India, and in parts of some provinces the peasants were so much inspired by his call to suffer for the right that they rose against their exploiters, the landlords, without any exhortation from politcal people. In Oudh, which was a notorious taluqdari area, the excitement and tension was perhaps the highest in northern India. Crowds always had an effect of extreme unease on Government, much more so a crowd of peasants. When thousands of peasants gathered together in the district of Rae Bareli to march to the district headquarters for a demonstration, the authorities grew panicky and despatched a police and military force to stop them and send them back by force. This happened in January 1921. Jawaharlal Nehru, who had just then started his political work with personal contact with villages and villagers in Oudh, was present on the spot but was taken away by the district magistrate to his residence. The demonstrators insisted on marching to the headquarters, but the authorities would not allow it at any cost. There was firing in which, to quote Nehru, 'many men were killed'.

To quote Nehru again, 'Firing on kisans took place on two occasions in Rae Bareli district about that time, and then began, what was much worse, a reign of terror for every promi-

nent kisan worker or member of a *panchayat*. Government had decided to crush the movement. Hand-spinning on the charkha was then spreading among the peasantry at the instance of the Congress. A charkha therefore became the symbol of sedition and its owner got into trouble, the charkha itself being often burnt. Thus the Government tried to crush by hundreds of arrests and other methods both the agrarian and the Congress movements in the rural areas of Rae Bareli and Pratabgarh. Most of the principal workers were common to the two movements. A little later, in the year 1921, Fyzabad district had its dose of widespread repression. The trouble started there in a peculiar way. The peasants of some villages went and looted the property of a taluqdar. It transpired subsequently that they had been incited to do so by the servants of another zamindar who had some kind of feud with the taluqdar. The poor ignorant peasants were actually told that it was the wish of Mahatma Gandhi that they should loot and they willingly agreed to carry out this behest, shouting "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" in the process.

There was unrest and an agrarian movement and any excuse was good enough to strike at the offender. Government too was quick to seize any excuse to crush the movement. and it did so ruthlessly. Over a thousand arrests were made, and the district gaol was overcrowded and the trial went on for the best part of a year. Many died in prison during the trial. Many others received long sentences and, says Nehru, 'in later years, when I went to prison, I came across some of them, boys and young men, spending their youth in prison.'

The authorities throughout the country were in a state of panic—fearing that the temper of the people being generally anti-British anything might happen at any time. It is typified in his autobiography by Nehru: 'I learnt one day through a barrister friend that many English people were thoroughly upset and expected some sudden upheaval in the city. They distrusted their Indian servants and carried about revolvers in their pockets. It was even said privately that the Allahabad Fort was kept in readiness for the English colony to retire there in case of need.... Oh, it was said, May 10th (the day accidentally fixed for my sister's marriage) was the anniver-

sary of outbreak of the Mutiny at Meerut in 1857 and this was going to be celebrated!'

The resolutions being adopted by different bodies constituting the component parts of the movement were indeed quite disturbing to Government. On July 8, 1921 the All-India Khilafat Conference proclaimed that 'it is in every way religiously unlawful for a Mussalman at the present moment to continue in the British army, to enter the army, or to induce others to join the army. And it is the duty of Mussalmans in general and of the Ulema in particular to see that these religious commandments are brought home to every Mussalman in the army.' The Conference also decided that if the British Government fought the Turkish Government and humiliated it, the Muslims of India would declare independence of India and hoist the flag of Indian republic at the next session of the Congress. Mohammed Ali, who presided over the Conference, made a very impassioned speech which was characterised by officials as seditious and which later provided Government with material for his prosecution.

The All-India Congress Committee, which met at Bombay in the last week of July, toed the Khilafat Conference line and advised the Indian people that 'it was the inherent right of a citizen to pronounce his opinion upon the advisability or otherwise of Government servants leaving civil or military service and that it was the inherent right of every citizen to appeal in an open manner to every soldier or civilian to sever his connection with a government which had forfeited the confidence and support of a vast majority of the population of India.' The A-ICC called upon 'all persons belonging to the Congress to discard the use of foreign cloth as from the 1st day of August next.' Importers of cloth were advised to cancel all foreign cloth orders. It was laid down as a rule that the operating non-cooperators would not participate in the proceedings in the event of prosecution or civil suit being brought against them and would not furnish any security demanded of them. They were however permitted to make before the court a full statement of facts in order to establish their innocence before the public.

Lest Government should be caught napping and some pro-

gramme of serious disturbances put into effect suddenly by Congress and Khilafat leaders, the authorities decided upon a general round-up of the leading political workers. Movements of some leaders were restrained; some were detained without trial; and some were put up for prosecution. All members of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee (55) were taken into custody while they were holding a committee meeting. This step, instead of frightening the people, had a contrary effect. 'Many who had so far taken no part in any Congress or political activity were carried away by the wave of enthusiasm and insisted on being arrested. In some cases clerks returning from their offices in the evening were swept away by this current and landed in gaol instead of their homes. Young men and boys would crowd inside the police lorries and refuse to come out. The gaols were crowded and the gaol officials were at their wits' end at this extraordinary phenomenon. It happened sometimes that a police lorry would bring, according to the warrant accompanying it, a certain number of prisoners—no names were or could be mentioned. Actually a larger number than that mentioned would emerge from the lorry and gaol officials did not know how to meet this novel situation. There was nothing in the jail manual about it. Gradually the Government gave up the policy of indiscriminate arrests; only noted workers were picked out.'[1]

The vibrations of the Khilafat call, travelling far into the south, penetrated the hilly tracts of the Malabar Coast. Here, in the ninth century, certain Arabs had settled and married Dravidian and other Hindu women and produced a new community called Moplas. A refractory lot, the Moplas believed only in violence as a means of supplanting the established authority. And they decided that the authority must be supplanted. They collected arms and made themselves ready for their mission. The local administration learnt of it on July 25, and ordered a search in different places. At Pukkotur the search led to a riot in which the police were overpowered. Now began general lawlessness. A force of 5,000 Moplas applied itself to destructive activities in Parappangadi. A British

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 80

army officer and a police officer were murdered; the railway station was burnt, and the railway line was torn up. Next day there was a pitched battle between a British detachment and the rebels. The British force found itself unequal to the task; after losing two officers and several men, the officer in command lost his initiative and confined himself to defensive fighting. More troops were requisitioned from the neighbouring areas and thrown into action, but they too were beaten back by the rebels, who were triumphantly marching ahead. Fresh contingents were now sent for from the Himalayas and Burma —Gurkhas, Garhwalis and Kachins of the Burma Rifles—'within whose breast no possible Islamic notes could be struck and who thoroughly understood jungle warfare.' A mountain battery too was hurried to the scene. There were pitched battles at several places; the Moplas fought desperately and in the midst of fighting appointed their own Khilafat king, Muhammed Haji; but they were foolish enough to believe that they would be able to supplant the authority of a big empire. Eventually they surrendered, 38,256 of them. The loss of life was quite heavy. Two thousand, two hundred and sixty-six were killed and 1,615 wounded. Of those who went into hiding, 5,688 were captured. Among these were the 'Khilafat King' and 21 of his close followers; they were captured on January 7, 1922. The 'King' was shot by sentence of the court martial on January 20 with six others. Others were put up for trial before special courts and sentenced to long terms.

A ghastly chapter of reprisals was enacted in a goods train. About 70 (one version says 100) Moplas were huddled in a goods wagon for being transported from Calicut to Madras. South India's summer sun was scorching the iron wagon, and when it was opened at Podanoor railway station 66 were found dead and others in a precarious condition.

The Moplas revolt gave a rude shock to Hindu-Muslim unity, which was the very basis of the non-co-operation movement. The Khilafat kingdom of the Moplas' conception was a purely Islamic state with no place for non-believers. Hindus were therefore also made a target of attack or converted to Islam. There was an economic reason also: the Moplas were inimical to Hindu landlords. As W. C. Smith says: 'The

Moplas were bitter; bitterly anti-Hindu, bitterly anti-British, bitter against the world that gave them only misery. Their ardour was the ardour of an oppressed class rising against its enemies, the ardour of religious fanaticism destroying sin and establishing a kingdom of good.'[2] The Congress did not regard the Mopla revolt as part of its movement, and in its opinion the 'conversions were forced upon Hindus by a fanatic gang which was always opposed to the Khilafat and Non-co-operation Movement and there were only three cases so far as our information goes.' But in reply to a question in the Legislative Assembly it was stated on the authority of the Madras Government that 'the number of forcible conversions probably runs to thousands but for obvious reasons it will never be possible to obtain anything like an accurate estimate.'[3] The Congress Working Committee condemned the Mopla revolt and stated in a resolution that 'the disturbances took place only in areas in which Congress and Khilafat activities were prohibited.'

But in the south, Malabar was not the only territory to be affected. As the Governor of Madras, Lord Willingdon, said in the provincial Legislative Council on September 1, 1921, 'serious as is the position in Malabar, I feel it my duty to warn honourable members that it is not Malabar alone that gives the Government grave cause for anxiety. Throughout the Circar and more particularly in Deltic districts, the same insidious propaganda has been at work, undermining constituted authority, preaching race hatred, seeking to instil into the masses impatience of and contempt for constitutional authority.' In fact that was practically the condition in the whole of India.

In September a new phase began. The Ali brothers and five others were arrested for their 'seditious' speeches at Karachi at the July session of the All-India Khilafat Conference and for sponsoring a resolution of the same variety. The five others were: Dr. Kitchlew, Jagatguru Shankaracharya (of Sarda Peeth), Nisar Ahmed, Pir Ghulam Mujadid and Hussain Ahmed. All

[2] W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, p. 235
[3] Assembly Debates, January 16, 1922

were awarded two years. Mohammed Ali, in justification of his utterances, said: 'After all what is the meaning of this precious prosecution? By whose convictions are we to be guided, we the Mussalmans and the Hindus of India? Speaking as a Mussalman if I am supposed to err from the right path, the only way to convince me of my error is to refer me to the Holy Koran.'

When Gandhi, who was at Trichnopoly at the time of the Karachi trial, came to know that Mohammed Ali's speech at the Khilafat Conference constituted one of the charges against him, he repeated that speech in public. The Congress Working Committee, meeting on October 5, also passed a resolution on the lines of the Khilafat Conference resolution and called upon all provincial and district Congress committees to do likewise. On October 16 the resolution was debated at public meetings and passed by the audiences in an atmosphere of excitement. The Working Committee resolution, repeated by subordinate committees and public meetings, said: 'It is contrary to national dignity and national interest for any Indian to engage or remain in the service of Government in any capacity whatever, a government that has used the soldiers and the police for repressing the just aspirations of the people as during the Rowlatt Act agitation and that has utilized the soldiers for the purpose of crushing the national spirit of the Egyptians, the Turks, the Arabs, and other nations.' The Working Committee expressed its inability to give jobs to those who left Government service and therefore called upon such of them as could support themselves to come out. Soldiers and policemen were advised to take up carding, spinning and weaving to earn a living.

For about two years the country had been astir with all manner of manifestations of unrest, disaffection and defiance, but, amusingly enough, the civil disobedience movement contemplated by Gandhi had yet to be formally declared. A question may be asked: why should it be felt that a formal declaration was wanting when all that was going on was enough to provoke Government to resort to repression and when repression was adding fire to the agitation? The Working Committee meeting of October 5, again amusingly enough, did not consider

the time yet opportune for a mass movement but permitted individuals to offer civil disobedience wherever they were prevented from carrying on their normal swadeshi activities. Next month, in response to demands, the Working Committee authorised the provincial committees to start civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, on their own responsibility. Some conditions were prescibed which every individual was required to fulfil before he was allowed to be a civil resister. These were: (1) He must discard foreign cloth and wear khaddar (hand-spun and hand-woven cloth); (2) he must know how to spin and turn out a certain amount of yarn; (3) he must be a believer in non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity; (4) he must work for removal of untouchability.

For people not willing to co-operate with their government and determined to resist its authority, it is not difficult to pick up points of attack. In the middle of November the Prince of Wales arrived in Bombay. The Working Committee discussed the visit and advised the country to boycott it. The city of Bombay gave a splendid response, and tens of thousands of people moved about in the streets. As we have seen the first reaction of the authorities had always been to disperse crowds and that of the crowds to resist. This was naturally what happened on this occasion also. For four days there were clashes, rioting and bloodshed, resulting in 53 deaths and injury to 400.

The volunteer activity received incentive from the Prince's visit because it was through the Congress and Khilafat volunteers that the boycott was to be organized in the places to be visited by him. In Calcutta, where he was to arrive on December 25, the volunteer organization was declared illegal before that date and several thousand young men in different parts of the province were arrested. That women—the wife and sister of the pre-eminent leader, C. R. Das and some other ladies had also been arrested—too were not being spared made the people furious, and defiance to authority became a common sight. Calcutta gave Government a foretaste of the shape of things to come, and it made a mass-scale round up: about 20,000 people were arrested all over the country. Prominent men among the arrested were, Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose, who later on rose to great

heights. According to Jawaharlal Nehru, 'during the months of December 1921 and January 1922 it is estimated that about thirty thousand persons were sentenced to imprisonment.' Gandhi was still out of jail.

The Prince's visit and the Indians' decision not to welcome it but to boycott it raised a fundamental point: whether the people of a civilized country were or were not free to give expression to their views within the limits of the law and consitutionalism. The Congress contended that the Prince's personality should have been kept above political controversies and that he had been invited at that particular time to divert people's attention from the issues before the country. It asserted, though it did so in the context of the visit, that it was the right of the people to form volunteer corps for non-violent constitutional activities and that the orders banning it deprived the people of their right. Therefore the agitation in connection with the visit also took the shape of vindication of the right by defiance of the orders which suppressed civil liberties. Pledges were taken, particularly by those conducting volunteer organizations and constituting volunteer corps. Below is a sample of the pledge taken in U. P. after a Government notification illegalising volunteer organizations:

> Having read and thoroughly understood the Government notifications Nos. 2931 and 2932 dated November 22, 1921 and knowing full well the consequences of not obeying them, we, of our free will, offer ourselves as members of the Congress Provincial Volunteer Corps and we hereby pledge ourselves civilly to disobey, without any objection, all such Government orders and laws as may be determined from time to time by the Provincial Congress Committee or by a committee appointed by it in this behalf. And we further pledge ourselves to obey, in utter disregard of the consequences, all orders of the officers of the Volunteer Corps relating to such disobedience of Government orders.
>
> So long as we remain in any volunteer organisation, we shall faithfully and diligently carry out all the instructions received from our superiors. We shall observe the pledge of non-violence in word and deed and shall inculcate the

spirit of non-violence amongst others. We shall regard the pledge as binding upon us so long as the policy of non-violence is continued by the nation. We shall run all risks attendant upon the performance of our policy.

We pledge ourselves that in case we are arrested or sentenced to imprisonment or some other proceedings are taken by Government against us, we shall not expect any monetary help for ourselves or for our relatives from the Congress or any other public fund.

The pledge was published in the press, and the people were told of the righteousness of the stand. The whole conception of the rule of law and the rights enjoyed by people under a civilised rule was, it was stated, in jeopardy; it was thrown into jeopardy, the world was told, only because the British would not allow any propaganda that would make the Indian people conscious of their political rights and call them to rally behind an organization that asked for justice and self-determination. That was the crux of the situation. On the one hand the British told the world that India was not yet fit for self-government; and on the other they would not allow even non-violent mass processions and meetings for fear of the inevitable result that the masses would, like Congressmen, become Swarajya-minded. The past doings of Government provided enough proof: most firings were made to disperse crowds.

Whether by plan or accident, the attitude obtaining at the 1919 Congress which accepted the new reforms, had been made anachronistic. The new spirit of nationalism no more thought of the reforms and repudiated the British as unwanted foreign rulers. In the prevailing temper the boycott of a foreign prince, who came as a symbol of British rule, was a natural corollary. He was greeted with hartals and hostile demonstrations wherever he went. And wherever he went, the arrest of local leaders preceded him exacerbating public temper further.

The Congress of 1921, it appeared, was years ahead of that of 1919. The reforms of 1919 were discussed with resentment, and it was stated that India would cooperate with the British only when they recognized her inherent right to freedom. The Congress would now like the energies of the country to be

applied to the effort aimed at achieving this objective, and called upon every man of eighteen years and above to join the National Volunteer Corps. The Congress would itself further the objective and appointed Gandhi as its sole executive authority. Subordinate Congress committees were told to defy Government orders that prohibited committee meetings and public meetings. Stress was laid on non-violence, and the resolution re-affirmed 'the fixed determination of the Congress to continue the programme of non-violent non-cooperation with greater vigour than hitherto in such manner as each province may determine.'

In the paradoxical situation of the mounting agitation without formal inauguration of the projected civil disobedience movement by Gandhi and without an indication of the shape it would take, different provincial Congress committees were thinking differently about the future course of the agitation. Some days before the annual Congress session the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee decided to launch a campaign for stoppage of Government taxes. The district of Guntur actually started the campaign, while others were in the process of preparations. The impetus came with the shooting of a leading villager by a police sub-inspector. The villagers' unbending resistance was a formidable headache to the local police, and it was reinforced by a military unit. But the campaign was stopped by Gandhi himself. Just a while before an all-parties conference (attended by about 300 representatives of different public bodies in India) was held at Bombay to explore the possibility of truce between the Congress and Government. The Conference had suggested that (1) Government should abandon its policy of repression, (2) a round table conference should be convened by Government to settle the questions of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs and swarajya, (3) prohibitory orders should be withdrawn and all political prisoners should be released. The Working Committee accepted the terms at its meeting on January 17, 1922, and Gandhi asked the Andhra peasants to pay up Government dues if only to create a suitable atmosphere for peace to be ushered in.

The conciliatory effort failed, and on February 1, Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy. After complaining of repression—'looting of property, assaults on innocent people, brutal treat-

ment of the prisoners in jail including flogging'—he said: 'The lawless repression (in a way unparallel in the history of this unfortunate country) had made immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty. The Working Committee of the Congress has restricted it only to certain areas to be selected by me from time to time, and at present it is confined only to Bardoli.[4] I may, under the said authority, give my consent at once in respect of a group of 100 villages in Guntur in the Madras Presidency provided they can strictly conform to the conditions of non-violence, unity among different classes, the adoption and manufacture of hand-spun khaddar, and removal of untouchability.' He added: 'But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-cooperating prisoners, who are convicted or are under trial for non-violent activities, and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country, whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrong or Swaraj or any other purpose and even though they fall within the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws, subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the Press from all administrative control and restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging I am asking your Excellency to do what is today being done in every country which is deemed to be under civilized government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this Manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise postponement of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered it *de novo*.'

This again was a reiteration of the basic tenets of constitutional propaganda. (The people should be free even to demand cancellation of laws that offended against their right of

[4] Bardoli (in Gujarat) had been permitted by the Working Committee (January 1922) to resort to a non-rent campaign, but it had not yet begun.

freedom of expression and freedom of association; and if any provisions in the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code curbed this right, those provisions would be ignored for the enjoyment of that right. The demand ran wholly counter to Government policy, and the Viceroy in his reply rejected it.

Gandhi was now free to go ahead with his no-rent campaign at Bardoli and other places of his choice. But it was not to be. What stayed him was a gruesome tragedy which took place on February 5, at Chauri Chaura, a village near Gorakhpur in U. P. Here a procession under the auspices of the National Volunteers was taken out. As it was passing along the street, people at the rear end complained that some constables had abused them. Then, in the words of Gandhi (*Young India*), 'the mob turned. The constables opened fire. The little ammunition they had was exhausted and they retired to the thana[5] for safety. The mob, my informant tells me, therefore set fire to the thana. The self-imprisoned constables had to come out for dear life and as they did so they were hacked to pieces and the mangled remains were thrown into the raging flames.'

The event, which shocked Gandhi, was out of tune with his principle and programme, and he abandoned the no-rent campaign which was to begin in Bardoli. Left to himself he would have none of the processions or public meetings, but the All-India Congress Committee, which met on February 24 and 25 (at Delhi), was not prepared to carry the rejection to this extent and retained the individual character of the movement—individuals could disobey bad orders and bad laws and take the consequence according to the Congress discipline. Peaceful picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops was also permitted.

The A-ICC met at a time when top Congress leaders were in jail. They—men like Motilal Nehru and Lajpat Rai—sent angry letters to Gandhi from jail giving an impression that if they were free, they would have thrown their weight against Gandhi's advice and would have resisted the move for abandoning the mass movement. They argued that Chauri Chaura,

[5] police station

while unfortunate, should not have been allowed to interfere with the programme of the civil disobedience movement. Even at the A-ICC meeting, certain voices sought to censure Gandhi.

This was the most opportune time for Government to arrest him. The man who was adored by the intelligentsia and the multitude alike was now being criticised like ordinary mortals! He was arrested on March 13, when the layers of dust had appeared over the flames, and there was little shouting and there were few public meetings. As C. F. Andrews remarked, while Gandhi rose high to meet a great occasion in abandoning the mass movement, Government seized this exact moment for hitting him below the belt. 'From a worldly point of view,' Andrews said, 'it was a diplomatic stroke, but it had no chivalry in it.' The Viceroy, Lord Reading, himself wrote complacently to the Secretary of State: 'Gandhi had pretty well run himself into the last ditch as a politician.' To arrest him now, he added, would be safe; there would be no conflagration. There was none. And he again wrote: 'I have had no trouble so far arising from Gandhi's arrest.'

Gandhi's three articles, published in his weekly *Young India*, were selected for his prosecution. They were interpreted as causing disaffection. Pleading guilty to the charge he made a long statement before the court, in which, after narrating how since 1893 he had been offering ready co-operation to British authorities he said:

> In spite of the foreboding and grave warnings of friends at the Amritsar Congress in 1919, I fought for co-operation and working the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise[6] to the Indian Muslims that the Punjab would be healed and that the Reforms, inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India. But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was

[6] The British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, had declared during the war: Nor are we fighting to deprive Turkey of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race.'

not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was whitewashed and the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and brokerage are sucked from the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiased examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of hundred, justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion the administration of the law is thus prostituted, consciously or unconsciously, for the benefit of the exploiter.

The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many English and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world and that India is making steady though slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organized display of force on the one hand and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other have emasculated the people and inducted in them the habit that has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators.

Section 124-A, under which I am happily charged, is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or thing, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite violence. But the section under which Mr. Banker and I are charged is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a government which, in its totality, has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system.

In fact I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-cooperation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. But in the past, non-cooperation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil, and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-cooperation with evil. I am here therefore to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what, in law, is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge and the assessors, is either to resign your posts and thus dissociate yourselves from evil if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent, or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people

of this country and that my activity is, therefore, injurious to the public weal.

The Judge concerned himself with Gandhi's admission of the 'guilt' and sentenced him to six years, remarking that Tilak was, on a similar charge, sentenced to the same term.

Government perhaps believed that the suspension of the movement, with the removal of Gandhi from the scene, would mean its natural death. Once again Government gave, by this miscalculation, a fresh lease of life to the movement. A section of the All-India Congress Committee had already been opposed to Gandhi's resolution for suspension, and on the imprisoned leader's views becoming known more members were drawn to the side of the opposition. The Committee (at its meeting on June 7-9) appointed a sub-committee to study the situation and recommend 'whether civil disobedience in some form or some other measure of similar character should be adopted.' The sub-committee consisting of Motilal Nehru, Dr. M. A. Ansari, V. J. Patel, Jamnalal Bajaj, C. Rajagopalachari, and S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar made a tour of the country. When they alighted at the Guntur railway station, they got a clear indication of Government's attitude. About 200 volunteers, who had come to the station to receive the leaders, were taken into custody. The sub-committee's study of the temper of the country led it to recommend that the provincial Congress committees should 'be authorized to sanction limited mass civil disobedience on their own responsibility.' The All-India Congress Committee adopted the recommendation, which was later ratified by the annual session of the Congress (held at Gaya). The movement was now largely an affair of individuals, who resorted to different kinds of activities.

It was in this period that Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested for the second time for 'threatening in a public speech the dealers in foreign cloth in Allahabad to injure their trade by picketing their shops' and sentenced to 18 months. The swadeshi movement was quite popular and picketing of foreign cloth shops was a programme which anybody could take up all by himself. For months the arrests continued, but Government regained its sense of security. 'At that time,' in the words of Jawaharlal

Nehru, 'our movement, in spite of its apparent power and the widespread enthusiasm, was going to pieces. All organization and discipline was disappearing, almost all our good men were in prison, and the masses had so far received little training to carry on by themselves. Any unknown man who wanted to do so could take charge of a Congress committee and, as a matter of fact, large numbers of undesirable men, including *agents provocateurs*, came to the front and even controlled some local Congress and Khilafat organizations.'

India had a big question confronting it—India of emperors, kings, rajas and nawabs: who would supplant the British? The answer vaguely was, the so many public leaders who courted jail for the country. There was a change in the mental attitude. The traditional awe and fear of rulers yielded place to respect and devotion to the leaders. The masses, both in towns and villages, got a glimpse of the content of the political movements. The old attitude of regarding the British as conquerors and therefore inevitable as rulers was shaken to its root. Now people asked each other: the British were foreigners and the demand that they must go was right; in India Indians should themselves rule. Any movement, whatever its strength and striking power, can be suppressed by an imperial power, whose colonies lie scattered all over the world. But the spirit the civil disobedience movement created could not be killed by any means. The success lay in the fact that millions of men, women and children became irrreconcilably anti-British.

17

The Events of 1923-28

THREE different attitudes of mind bore on the forces which constituted the movement: those who whole-heartedly supported Gandhi's non-cooperation programme at the 1920 Congress, those who did not like it but became party to it because the majority decision was binding on them, and the Muslims, who joined the movement because it constituted a massive protest against the Khilafat wrong. To the latter two the movement had been a failure. They would not regard the tremendous consciousness it had created as a satisfactory result. That the movement could not by itself liquidate British rule was obvious to any man of intelligence. Congressmen, opposed to Gandhi's programme, now (in the beginning of 1923) thought of their suppressed ambition—to contest the elections to the legislative councils which were shortly due. And Muslims had not much interest left in the non-cooperation movement or for that matter in any such movement after the turmoil and political changes in Turkey. While Gandhi was in jail these forces were divided into three natural parts.

The dissident Congress delegates moved a resolution at the Gaya Congress (1922), seeking permission to enter the legislative councils, but it was rejected by 1,740 votes to 890. The president, C. R. Das, was one of the dissidents, and he resigned his office after the voting. His argument for entry into the Councils, as he stated in his presidential address, was: 'I am not against the boycott of the councils. I am simply of opinion that the system of the reformed councils with their steel frame of the Indian Civil Service is absolutely unsuitable to the nature and genius of the Indian nation.... It should be the duty of the Congress to boycott the councils more effectively from within.'

He and his followers formed a new organization, the Swaraj Party, within the Congress to carry the fight for self-government into the legislatures. By September, when a special session of the Congress was held, they mustered enough strength and succeeded in having the Gaya resolution rejected and substituted by one favouring entry into the councils. Those not agreeing with the change were called no-changers and they took to Gandhi's constructive work programme—spinning, temperance, removal of untouchability and other items of social reform.

The Congress was a sharply-divided house, and in this state the Swaraj Party appeared in the contest. 'The result was that only in the Central Provinces Council did the Swaraj Party enjoy a clear majority. In Bengal they represented the strongest individual group, but without the aid of a coalition they could not hope to enjoy supremacy. In Bombay and in the United Provinces, though they were returned in considerable numbers, they had not the majority of votes. In Madras, in the Punjab, and in Bihar and Orissa, they were very weak. In the Central Legislature, upon which they had concentrated a large portion of their forces, they failed to capture a fair half of the elected seats in the Assembly. Nevertheless, they had reason to be well satisfied with the result of the elections. They had definitely displaced their Liberal rivals as the exponents of the political ideals of the Indian intelligentsia.'[1]

The franchise being very limited and special constituencies being under official influence, Congress defeat in so many constituencies deserved to be analysed with sympathy and understanding. The confusion inside the Congress was reflected in the minds of the voters. Nevertheless, the defeat was considered by critics, even impartial critics, as the measuring rod of Congress popularity. The no-changers, by their adoption of Gandhi's constructive work programme, had implied that Gandhi was against the council-entry programme. On his release (for reasons of health) on February 5, 1924, he himself said: 'There is an honest and fundamental difference. I retain the opinion that council-entry is inconsistent with non-cooperation as I conceive it. To be out of the legislative bodies is far more

[1] *India in 1924-25*, p. 298 (Official Report)

advantageous to the country than to be in them. I have however failed to convince my Swarajist friends, but I recognize that so long as they think otherwise, their place is undoubtedly in the councils. It is the best for us all.' But he significantly added: 'If I enter the councils, I should, without following a general policy of obstruction, endeavour to give strength to the constructive programme of the Congress. I should therefore move resolutions requiring the Central and Provincial Governments (1) to make all their cloth purchases in hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar; (2) to impose a prohibitive duty on foreign cloth; (3) to abolish the drink and drug revenue, and at least correspondingly reduce the army expenditure. If the Government refuse to enforce such resolutions when carried in the legislatures, I should invite them to dissolve them and take the vote of the electors on the specific points. It the Government would not dissolve them, I should resign my seat and prepare the country for civil disobedience. When that stage is reached, the Swarajists will find me ready to work with and under them.' There was enough hint in the statement as to how to carry the struggle into the legislative councils.

The struggle began with the Central Provinces Legislative Council, in which the Swarajists had an absolute majority. They first refused the ministerial posts for the 'transferred subjects' in the Governor's Executive Council, and after the ministers had been appointed from other parties, they tabled and carried a vote of no-confidence against those ministers. When the budget was presented, the Swaraj Party refused all the supplies which, under the constitution, were put to the vote of the legislature. The constitution was indeed partially wrecked: the offices of ministers remained vacant because of the refusal of the budget grant by the Legislative Council.

In Bengal the Swarajists achieved majority in the Council by forming coalition with some independent members, mainly Muslim, and threw out motion after motion brought by Government. In the early part of 1924 Government was thrice defeated by the coalition. Here also the ministers' salary grant was rejected. By a resolution, which was duly passed by the Council, it was further demonstrated that the people's wishes ran just counter to those of Government. The resolution recom-

mended to Government that all persons detained under Regulation III of 1818 and all other political prisoners should be released forthwith and that repressive laws should be repealed. The Governor did not accept the recommendation, and through the Press the entire country and people abroad knew that British rule was autocratic and humiliated public opinion.

The Swarajists no doubt suffered defeats in the elections, but Indians were Indians after all, and in the (central) Legislative Assembly almost all elected members joined hands on vital issues. The first demand the combination made was that a round table conference of Indian leaders and the rulers's representatives should be called to prepare a scheme for the establishment of full responsible government in India. The Government of India made no response. Next the Assembly threw out part of the budget grants and refused leave to introduce the Finance Bill. Then defeat after defeat was inflicted on Government.

In the meantime the dull political scene outside the legislatures was again galvanised not by constitutional agitators but by terrorists, who after a suspense of seven years, now believed that Gandhi's non-violent movements had failed to produce any effect on the British Government. In January 1924 one Ernest Day was murdered by Gopi Mohan Saha in mistake for the Police Commissioner, named Tegart of the Bengal Police Service. In April another Englishman, Bruce, was fired at on Harrison Road, Calcutta; it was again a case of mistaken identity. In March a bomb factory was discovered in Calcutta fully equipped with explosives and implements for loading and fitting bomb-shells. In July a member of the revolutionary party was arrested in the streets of Calcutta with a fully loaded revolver. Even some Congressmen were so much taken up by the bomb politics that in June the Bengal Provincial Political Conference, presided over by C. R. Das, passed a resolution expressing admiration for the spirit of self-sacrifice exhibited by Gopi Mohan Saha.

To meet the new situation the Viceroy promulgated, on the recommendation of the Bengal Governor, an ordinance (on October 25), establishing a summary procedure for the arrest and trial before special commissioners of persons believed by

Government to be belonging to revolutionary associations. Soon after the publication of the ordinance in the official gazette a large number of politicians, including some members of the Swaraj Party, were arrested indiscriminately. The ordinance and the doings that followed it found an echo in the Bengal Legislative Council, whose elected members (being in majority) rejected it. The Council also refused to sanction the provision for the ministers salaries.

By the criterion of the non-cooperation resolution, the struggle within the legislative councils was a mere travesty, and whatever the conviction of those who advocated and adopted it, to the people it was an escapist device. But the bitter truth was that many of those who had participated in the movement and suffered by responding to different items of the non-cooperation programme were repentant. Gandhi himself said, as he always admitted the truth, in his presidential address to the 1924 Congress (held at Belgaum): 'We are face to face with a situation that compels us to cry halt. For whilst individuals hold firmly to their belief in non-cooperation, the majority of those who are immediately concerned have practically lost faith in it, with the exception of boycott of foreign cloth. Scores of lawyers have resumed practice. Some even regret having ever given it up. Many who had given up councils have returned to them, and the number of those who believe in council-entry is on the increase. Hundreds of boys and girls who gave up Government schools and colleges have repented of their action and have returned to them. I hear that Government schools and colleges can hardly cope with the demand for admission.' Gandhi also admitted that the Swaraj Party represented, if not a majority, at least a strong and growing minority in the Congress.

Indeed the minority was growing fast. In 1925 the Swaraj Party became so powerful that Gandhi expressed his readiness to surrender the leadership to Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Party in the Central Legislature. Gandhi's position was unenviable: he was president of the Congress, but the Swarajist leaders made policy statements without consulting him. At a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee (held in July) it became clear that the Swarajists were in majority and

Gandhi's followers in minority. He asked Motilal Nehru to assume presidentship of the Congress but was prevailed upon to continue for the remainder of his term, that is up to the end of 1925. Some time later he suffered another defeat. At its 1924 annual session the Congress had by a resolution laid down that the organization's activity would be restricted to the constructive work programme and that work in connection with the legislatures should be carried on by the Swaraj Party under its own rules and by separate funds. In September (1925) the All-India Congress Committee, whose complexion was now different from what it was in December 1924, adopted a new resolution reversing the old decision: 'The Congress now do take up and carry on all such political work as may be necessary in the interest of the country and for this purpose do employ the whole of the machinery and funds of the Congress, save and except such funds and assets as are specially earmarked and belong to the All-India and Provincial Khaddar Boards, which shall be handed over with all existing financial obligations to the All-India Spinners' Association started by Mahatma Gandhi as an integral part of the Congress organization but with independent existence and full powers to administer these and other funds for the fulfilment of its object.'

This was unequivocal dissociation of the Congress from Gandhi's constructive work, which to him was an integral part of the struggle for swarajya, because it aimed at reviving India's ancient cottage industry and doing away with an ancient social evil, untouchability. Why did the Swarajists virtually disown it? Because the Secretary of State for India had in a speech indicated that the Congress should become a purely political party. More favourable interpretation was put on the speech than was warranted by it: Swarajists thought that a purely political Congress would accelerate the speed towards Swarajya. What added to the belief was Mrs. Besant's new move, 'How to agitate for the Commonwealth of India Bill,' on which she addressed crowded meetings and exhorted others to do the same. She had herself drafted the Bill, which provided for Dominion Status for India, and put it before the people for their attention to be concentrated on

it. In this there was no defiance of the authority, no non-co-operation; it was repetition of the conception of the Home Rule agitation, which Gandhi had made stale and out-of-date by his direct movement.

The new move fitted in with the struggle inside the legislatures, where an occasion arose for an expression to be given to it. In December 1924 Government had appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Central Executive Council's Home Member, to find out if the Government of India Act, 1919 could be worked more liberally. The committee, which consisted of a larger number of officials than non-official elected members of the central legislature, found little common ground to produce an agreed report and therefore submitted two reports, a majority (official) report, and a minority (non-official) report. The official members could not naturally exceed the boundaries of the Government of India Act; the non-official members did not recognize the boundaries and demanded full responsible government. When the majority report was presented before the Legislative Assembly for adoption, the Swaraj Party leader, Motilal Nehru, moved an amendment seeking replacement of dyarchy in the provinces by a unitary responsible government at the centre, responsible to the legislature. He said he would make an exception in regard to military expenditure and the Foreign and Political Departments. The amendment also demanded a round table conference or some other suitable agency to be set up to frame a detailed scheme of the new constitution. After two days' discussion Nehru's amendment was carried by 72 votes to 45. The amendment was made a dead letter by Government, and the Swaraj Party had another occasion to proclaim to the world that the legislatures were a farce.

But as time passed quite a sizeable number of Swaraj Party members gravitated towards the little honour and prestige that they could gain by what they called responsive co-operation. The beginning was made by the leader of the Party in the Central Provinces Legislative Council, S. B. Tambe, accepting the office of a minister in the Governor's Executive Council. The Tambe example became the forerunner of the disruption

in the Swaraj Party. In Bombay leading Swarajists like N. C. Kelkar, M. R. Jayakar and Dr. B. S. Moonje declared themselves in favour of the new move—responsive co-operation. And there were resignations from the Swaraj Party.

All this had the effect of the Swaraj Party losing its hold on the Congress, which in 1925 again went over to Gandhi. The year's Congress, over which Mrs. Sarojini Naidu presided, adopted the following programme, reversing the one by which the Swarajists had established their superiority over the no-changers, the followers of Gandhi:

> The work in the country shall be directed to the education of the people in their political rights and training them to acquire the necessary strength and power of resistance to win those rights by carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress with special reference to popularising the spinning wheel and khaddar, promoting intercommunal unity, removal of untouchability, ameliorating the condition of the suppressed classes, and removal of the drink and drug evil, and shall include the capture of local bodies.
>
> In case Government decision on new constitution for India is not announced before the end of February 1926, or the decision announced is held not to be satisfactory by a special committee consisting of the Working Committee of the Congress and such other members as may be appointed by the A-ICC, the Party shall, by adopting proper procedure, intimate to Government on the floor of the House that the Party will no longer continue to remain and work in the legislatures. The Swarajist members of the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State shall vote for the rejection of the Finance Bill and then immediately walk out. The Swarajist members of such Provincial Councils as may be in session at the time shall also leave their seats and all members of such Councils as are not in session at the time shall not attend further meetings of the said Councils and shall likewise report themselves to the special committee. No member of the Swaraj Party in the Council of State, in the Legislative

> Assembly, or in any of the Provincial Councils shall thereafter attend any meeting of any of the Legislatures or any of their committees, except for the purpose of preventing his seat from being declared vacant and of throwing out the provincial budget or other measures involving fresh taxation. But the special committee will allow the Swarajist members of any legislature to attend the legislature when such attendance is in its opinion essential for some special emergency.
>
> The executives of the provincial Congress committees are authorized to select candidates for the central and provincial legislatures for the general elections next year.

The Swarajists in the legislatures were by this resolution made consistent non-cooperators and deprived of the option to co-operate or non-cooperate with Government at will. But those who had been attracted by the move for responsive co-operation and the glamour going with it were lost to the Congress, and they imparted fresh vigour to the party of Liberals which lay nearly dead. Most of the responsive co-operators were those who wanted self-government all right but deplored Gandhi's jail-going programme. In the Central Assembly they and the Liberals formed a new party, National Party, under the leadership of Jinnah, who had kept aloof from all the movements which entailed imprisonment.

The Congress organization was weaker now than it had been at the time of the non-cooperation movement. The main cause was the distraction, by Swaraj Party politics, of the people's mind from the struggle—a suspended struggle was more congenial to the then temper of the people than a diversion towards the legislatures.

The other injury sustained by the Congress was much more grievous. It deprived the Congress of Muslim co-operation to gain which it had put an extra-territorial issue—Turkey and Khilafat—on the same footing as the demand for swarajya. During the years of the struggle there were a number of Hindu-Muslim riots in different cities of the country, particularly in northern India. (It had been asserted times without number by Indians and even India's supporters in England

that the riots were always engineered by the rulers' agents to divide the two communities or to keep them divided.) Though the riots gave a rude shock to Hindu-Muslim unity, it survived them leaving however a seed of suspicion, which could germinate and grow if it came to the soil treated with fertiliser. Both the soil and fertiliser were there in the improvised arrangement under which Hindus and Muslims had come together in a non-cooperation movement. When Indian Muslims were carrying on a struggle for Turkey and Khilafat, the complexion of Turkish politics changed so drastically that the Muslims were stunned. The king, Sultan Abdul Hamid, and his Khilafat were both thrown out not by the British but by a movement of Turks themselves. As Jawaharlal Nehru says, Turkey's new leader, Kamal Pasha's 'lack of religion, his abolition of the Sultanate and Khilafat, the building up of a secular state, and his disbandment of religious orders destroyed the dream structure that had gradually grown up in the Indian Muslim mind ever since the days of the Mutiny.' The Khilafat movement 'had its centre elsewhere, and when the core itself was eliminated by the Ataturk the super-structure collapsed, leaving the Muslim masses bewildered and disinclined to any political action.'

Educated Muslims, with British officials sympathising with them, were now reflecting on the events of the past decades; they had prejudiced the preferential treatment they had been receiving from Government; they joined, with no good result to themselves or Turkey, a movement which had the usual Congress pattern and which was massive only because Muslims made it so; they submitted to a leadership which was essentially Hindu and to a creed—non-violence—which was not Islamic. In substance, they said, they had allowed themselves to be fooled. In 1923 Maulana Mohammed Ali, presiding over the Congress, had said: 'Many have compared Mahatma Gandhi's teachings and latterly his personal sufferings to those of Jesus (on whom be peace).... The political conditions of India just before the advent of the Mahatma resembled those of Judea on the eve of the advent of Jesus, and the prescription that he offered to those in search of a remedy for the ills of India was the same that Jesus had dispensed before in

Judea. Self-purification through suffering, self-discipline as the condition precedent of Swaraj—this was Mahatma's creed and conviction.' The same Maulana said a year later, when the inspiring object in Turkey had disappeared: 'However pure Mr. Gandhi's character may be, he must appear to me, from the point of view of religion, inferior to any Mussalman even though he be without character.' Many did not believe the Press report of the Maulana's speech, and when they made an inquiry from him he said: 'Yes, according to my religion and creed I do hold an adulterous and a fallen Mussalman to be better than Mr. Gandhi.'

Gandhi was still hopeful of unity returning once again. Riots were continuing, and thousands of Hindus and Muslims were being killed by fanatics. Gandhi resorted to his usual weapon of pacification and undertook a 21-day fast. The place he chose to pass the days of the ordeal was Mohammed Ali's house. There was little effect; the riots continued and so did the Maulana's altered attitude. The spirit that had forged unity was now flowing into two different, hostile channels: Muslims and Hindus were organizing themselves separately, the former into Tanzim movement and the latter into Sangathan. The rulers had the peace of mind and lot of fun and amusement. Hindus' communal organization, the Hindu Mahasabha, which had, for obvious reasons, remained dormant since it had come into existence about a decade before, had now the feeling and assurance of being a force to be reckoned with. The Mahasabha's annual sessions of 1923 and 1924 were presided over by Madan Mohan Malaviya, a confirmed Congressman for many years. In fact the two communal organizations, the Mahasabha and the Muslim League, became inevitable part of the country's political life; not only Hindu leaders but Muslim leaders of the days of unity, including Mohammed Ali, also attended Mahasabha sessions, and Hindus reciprocated by going to Muslim League sessions. The situation was quite amusing: both the League and the Mahasabha had gone into hiding during the non-cooperation movement and their leaders stood aside as mere onlookers. Jinnah was one of them. The League was resuscitated in 1924, and meeting that year under the presidentship of Jinnah resumed its old role.

It appointed a committee of 33 to formulate political demands of the Muslim community. Jinnah scoffed at Hindu-Muslim unity and asked, 'where is unity?' But he did not yet accuse the Congress of being a Hindu body. To many other Muslim leaders the Congress was a Hindu organization. The president of the 1925 session of the League, Sir Abdur-Rahman, even stated in his address that the services of Englishmen were necessary for welfare of India.

Thus the political stage of India presented a distressing scene on the eve of the elections in 1926 to the provincial and central legislatures. Chaos had substituted the clear united front against the British. In the Congress there were no-changers, Swarajists, half-hearted Congressmen inclined towards responsive co-operation, and Hindus and Muslims of communal prejudices. In the Muslim organizations there were, on the one side, those who stood by the basic demand for self-government with adequate protection for Muslims, and on the other were those whose interests lay in consolidating the Muslims against the Hindus and who looked to the British for favours. And the people too, until recently united under one slogan—swarajya and Hindu-Muslim unity—were divided into different camps. The results of the elections were therefore worse for the Swaraj Party than what they were in 1923. Except for the Madras Presidency, where it swept the board, the party fared badly everywhere. It suffered its heaviest defeat in U.P. and the Punjab, where communal bitterness was the strongest. Congress leaders like Malaviya, Jayakar and Lajpat Rai had formed their own party, the Nationalist Party, for the elections, and being associated with the Hindu Mahasabha they captured a sizeable number of seats. No more was there an opportunity in the legislatures now to repeat the obstruction of the last legislatures. Ministers (of the reserved subjects) functioned smoothly. Only for consistency and preservation of its stand did the Congress at its annual session of 1926 reiterate that the Swaraj Party should (1) refuse to accept ministerships, (2) refuse supplies and throw out budgets, (3) reject proposals calculated to consolidate the position of the bureaucracy, and (4) support measures for economic, agricultural, industrial and commercial advancement of the country.

But the torch lit in the past decade was still burning bright. Despite the divisions and differences there was unanimity on the basic issue: India should attain full self-government, loosely called Dominion Status, and the leaders should put their heads together to solve the communal problem. The British had no misgiving about their own position and appointed in October 1927 a Statutory Commission to inquire into the working of the Government of India Act, 1919. The announcement appointing the Commission, which consisted of Englishmen exclusively, was greeted with strong disapproval by all parties, the Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Liberal Federation, proving that on the basic issue all sections of Indian public opinion were united. They protested that what they asked for was a round table conference of the representatives of the people and the rulers and said that they would boycott the Commission. The Congress was naturally ahead of all other parties. It found in the commission an opportunity to revive the non-cooperation spirit.

The Commission landed in Bombay on February 3, 1928 and was greeted by deserted bazars silenced into the peace of the grave by hartal. In other places visited by the Commission vociferous crowds were fired upon. Everywhere thousands of people gathered together and cried out at the top of their voices, 'Simon go back' (Sir John Simon was chairman of the Commission.) The boycott of the Commission assumed the shape of a movement. Scenes of the non-cooperation days reappeared. Crowds melted away with the shower of bullets, batons and lathis and reassembled after a while to shout again, 'Simon go back.' Among the top leaders to receive blows were Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru. The former's death, says Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, in his *History of the Congress*, 'was hastened by this assault'. In Lucknow the demonstrations continued for several days. The city was converted into an armed camp, with thousands of mounted and foot police moving in the streets and making attacks on the demonstrators. Private houses were invaded by the police and respectable national workers were beaten and arrested for daring to call out "Simon go back". The taluqdars of Oudh welcomed the Commission and gave a party in the historic Kaiserbagh

Baradari. The building had been put under heavy police guard; but the boycotters had their way. As soon as the party began, kites and baloons bearing the slogan 'Simon go back' went up over the Baradari.

The popular resentment against the Commission mirrored the common feeling that the future constitution of India should be framed by the people themselves or (since the British could not be ignored) by the rulers in consultation with and under the guidance of the people. The feeling was provided with flesh and blood, and at the initiative of Congressmen of different shades of opinion in the country and enjoying leadership in their own right met in an All-Parties Conference in February 1928 to hammer out a constitution. The Conference held 25 sittings in three months and after doing the spade work appointed on May 19 a committee, under the presidentship of Motilal Nehru, to give the discussions the shape of a constitution. The substance of what is called the Nehru Report was: India should have a form of government in which the executive should be responsible to the popularly elected legislature possessing full powers, i.e., its status should not be lower than that of any self-governing Dominion in the British Empire. The question of Muslim representation was not yet satisfactorily solved.

So far as the Congress was concerned the Dominion Status variety had become an anachronism, and it had, at its annual session of 1927, put forth complete independence as the ultimate goal of the Indian people. The resolution was reiterated at the 1928 session with the threat that in the event of its non-acceptance by the rulers by December 31, 1929, the Congress would 'organize a campaign of non-violent non-cooperation' and advise the country 'to refuse taxation' and carry on the struggle 'in such other manner as may be decided upon'.

For terrorists who had, as already stated, reappeared in 1924, non-violence was a meaningless flummery, and the premature death of Lajpat Rai in consequence of police lathi blows made the youth in the Punjab bitter. A militant youth organization, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, was formed at Lahore to propagate socialist ideas, preach direct action against the British, and make recruitment for a terrorist party. Soon

a terrorist party appeared, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association with its provincial and district branches. In December a few members of the Association, under the leadership of Bhagat Singh, planned the murder of a European assistant superintendent of police, named Saunders, and carried it out successfully. Saunders had led the police party which had charged the Simon Commission boycott procession headed by Lajpat Rai. The terrorists then proceeded to make the effect of the bomb felt in the Legislative Assembly itself. In April 1929 Bhagat Singh and his associate, B. K. Dutt, threw two bombs from the visitors' gallery into the Assembly chamber. The Assembly was at that time discussing the Trade Disputes Bill whose provisions were intended to be used against the working class movement. The two bomb-throwers made a confession before the court saying that their object was to make a demonstration and not to harm any body. They were sentenced to transportation for life.

Shortly afterwards a bomb factory was unearthed by police in Lahore, and a number of young men, suspected of association with terrorist activities, were arrested in the Punjab, U.P. and Bihar. In July thirteen of them were put up for trial in what is known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case, which included the Saunders' murder. The under-trials were subjected to torture in jail for several months. Once they were beaten in the court room in the presence of the trying magistrate. One of the accused later narrated the story in a book: 'There, in the presence of lawyers and visitors, scores of policemen armed with lathis and batons pounced upon us. We fought back with bare fists but the odds against us were too heavy. Blows rained on our heads, on our chests, on our arms. Thrown on the ground, we were kicked and beaten with lathis. The injuries were so serious that several comrades could not move for days together.' The authorities were not less cruel to the accused's sympathisers in the town. On one occasion seven young men, found collecting funds for the defence of the Lahore under-trials, were beaten up in the presence of the district magistrate. The beating was continued until all lay flat on the ground; some dropped off unconscious. In protest against the beastly treatment meted out to the under-trials,

they went on a fast unto death. One of them, Jatindranath Das, died after fasting for 63 days.

The trial was a mockery. It was conducted by a special tribunal constituted under an ordinance, which was specially promulgated for the purpose. No lawyers were allowed to appear for the accused. The tribunal awarded death sentence to three, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, and life transportation to seven. The Lahore Conspiracy Case was a long-drawn out affair; it was on March 23, 1931 that the condemned patriots were hanged. Bhagat Singh, whose confession and brave replies in the course of the trial, added lustre to his deed, became a household word throughout the country. Until India became free, hundreds of thousands of copies of his photograph were circulated and purchased by people to be kept by them as a hallowed possession. The news of the hanging stunned the country, and never, it seemed, was British rule so scornfully cursed spontaneously by all sections of the people as then. A large number of the elected members of the Legislative Assembly (which was in session then) walked out. The resentment was made vocal even by Moderates and Liberals because they too, like Congress leaders including Gandhi, had appealed to the Viceroy to commute the death sentence. The Congress, while dissociating itself from political violence, placed on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of Bhagat Singh and his comrades.

On December 23, 1929 an unsuccessful attempt was made to wreck the Viceroy's train near Delhi. The bomb used for the purpose was worked by a fuse connected with clock-work mechanism.

About that time another group of men, the Communist Party, started its activities designed to paralyse the Government machinery. In 1928-29 the Party brought about 203 strikes including one in the South Indian Railway involving 506,851 workers. The railway strike was looked upon with concern by the authorities, even by the judiciary, and 15 of the strike-instigators were sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment. The Communist Party had come into existence in India in 1924 or a little later. It was organized, according to information gathered by Government, by a group of young

men under 'inspiration and instructions from M. N. Roy, who had been carrying on a correspondence from an address in Berlin.' A Government publication, *India in 1924-25*, said: 'In one of the printed manifestos which he had widely distributed in India, Roy disowned all belief in the popular concept of revolution as a thing of bombs, revolvers and secret societies; individual outrages were as futile as Acts of the British Parliament; it is the rebellious masses alone which can bring about a great socio-political convulsion in India.' This was enough to rattle the authorities who contemplated with horror anything like the Russian Revolution happening in India, and many young men, suspected to be communists or of communist leanings, were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment by the obliging law courts in what was called the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. Indeed the goal of the Indian Communist Party, as announced by it, was that 'the present social organization and the Government of India should be changed, that all sources of production and distribution (such as lands, factories, mines, telegraphs, merchant marine, etc.) should come under the possession of the general public, and that they become masters thereof, and that this work should be accomplished in such a manner that all may take part in it and benefit from it.'

But Government failed to liquidate the Party. In 1927 Shapurji Saklatvala, then a member of the British Parliament, and a British communist, George Allison alias Donald Campbell, came to India. They toured the country and addressed large audiences in the principal cities encouraging the formation of peasants and workers' parties. The year 1928 saw the greatest tide of working class advance in the post-war years. Bengal was the centre of their activities. Government thought of a new law to deal with the new situation and approached the legislature in 1928 with the Public Safety Bill which sought to give the authorities power to deport 'persons not being British Indian subjects who seek to overthrow Government by certain destructive methods.' The Assembly rejected the bill, whose provisions it regarded as too sweeping. In January 1929 Government again brought the Bill with some alterations before the Assembly. It was again rejected. The

Viceroy then resorted to his extraordinary powers and issued an ordinance incorporating all the provisions of the Bill.

Government now proceeded with the action they had contemplated. In March 1929 it arrested 32 labour leaders including three Englishmen and some Congressmen. They were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the Government of India by means of criminal force, to incite antagonism between capital and labour, and incite strikes through workers and peasants' parties, youth leagues, unions, etc. The trial dragged on for three years and a half; the judgment was announced in January 1933. One of the accused, Muzaffar Ahmed, was transported for life and others to different terms of imprisonment.

Now had come the turn of the Congress to organize another mass movement, much bigger in its scope and more positive in its content than the previous one.

18

Civil Disobedience Movement—1930-31

The Congress of 1928 had appointed a foreign cloth boycott committee with Gandhi as its chairman. Such boycott, as had been demonstrated during the anti-Bengal Partition Movement, had strong elements of agitation against British rule, and Gandhi began the year 1929 with a countrywide campaign. Through his paper, *Young India* (January 29, 1929) he issued instructions to Congress bodies throughout the country to 'call for volunteers to go from door to door in every town and village and collect foreign cloth in the possession of householders, and deliver or receive orders for khadi.' He said: 'Voluntary preachers should be called for to popularize the use of khadi and to advocate complete boycott of foreign cloth. Foreign cloth collected should be publicly burnt wherever possible. Foreign cloth dealers should be individually visited with a view to enlisting their help and inducing them to stop further purchase of foreign cloth and to cancel all cancellable orders. Picketing of foreign cloth shops may be undertaken, wherever possible and where there is no danger of violence being committed, by Congress pickets. Resolutions should be moved in the provincial legislatures as well as the central, calling upon their respective Governments to make all their cloth purchases in khadi irrespective of its so-called costliness. Resolutions should also be moved demanding a prohibitive duty on imports of foreign cloth.' Gandhi's instructions were supplemented by numerous pamphlets and leaflets published in different parts of the country by Congress committees and individuals on their own initiative.

Gandhi made a tour of the country. He was already a Mahatma to the people who adored him as an incarnation of

God, and naturally his personal contact had a tremendous effect. The movement that once was the concern of Bengal mainly and had repercussions here and there now belonged to all provinces alike. There were huge bonfires of foreign cloth, causing deep anxiety to the textile industry of Britain. One of these in Calcutta resulted in the prosecution of Gandhi in the second week of March. He was accused of committing nuisance and sentenced to a token fine of one rupee.

Government interpreted the boycott campaign as preparation for the next massive law-defying movement and, in order to circumvent it, started arresting prominent Congressmen. Sedition was the easiest charge to be levelled against them, and they were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment, often rigorous, by the magistracy which was part of the executive. The remedy Government prescribed for the peace of its mind not only failed but added to its anxiety. Government interference with the peaceful boycott had serious repercussion on mill workers, and 150,000 of them in Bombay and 25,000 in Bengal struck work. A social organization, the Hindustani Seva Dal, called for the observation of the last Sunday of every month as a National Flag Day. The response was quite thrilling; at 8 a.m. on the appointed day people would gather round the flag pole to witness the hoisting of the tri-colour national flag. It was unfurled amidst full-throated cries of 'Bande-Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'. The activities of the Communist Party (as discussed in the previous chapter) and fears from the terrorists were not less alarming to Government.

Could something be done, Government asked itself and so did the quiet-loving Liberals, to patch up with Gandhi and avoid an upheaval towards which the country was forging ahead? On October 31 the Viceroy made a statement promising Dominion Status and that a Round Table Conference would be held to thrash out a new constitution for India. The statement, since it did not fix a date by which the promise would be implemented, was considered as vague by Congress leaders. Nevertheless, on December 23 there was a meeting between the Viceroy and the leaders, Gandhi and Motilal Nehru representing one school and Jinnah, Vithalbhai Patel

and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru another. Gandhi, the man who really mattered, asked the Viceroy whether the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status. The Viceroy expressed his inability to say a straight 'yes' in reply, and again Gandhi added more force to his case for a movement. The failure of the meeting turned out to be a more powerful propaganda than a thousand public meetings.

Against the background of this atmosphere, full of promise for the next movement, the 1929 annual session of the Congress assembled at Lahore in December as usual under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru, who brought youthful vigour to the Congress, said in his presidential address: 'The British empire today dominates over millions of people and holds large areas of world's surface despite the will of their inhabitants. It cannot be a true commonwealth so long as imperialism is its basis and the exploitation of other races its chief means of sustenance. The British Empire today is indeed gradually undergoing a process of political dissolution.' Then he declared: 'We stand for the fullest freedom of India. This Congress has not acknowledged and will not acknowledge the right of the British Parliament to dictate to us in any way. To it we make no appeal. But we do appeal to Parliament and the conscience of the world and to them we shall declare, I hope, that India submits no longer to any foreign domination.'

Nehru's new approach was reflected in the Congress declaring complete independence as its objective and cancelling the Nehru Report which was based on Dominion Status. The Congress was again completely under the influence of Gandhi, and the leading Swarajists including Motilal Nehru admitted the futility of the Council entry programme. One resolution after another, adopted by the Congress, vindicated and affirmed the stand Gandhi had taken since he became leader of the freedom movement. One resolution instructed Congressmen to abstain in future from participation in elections to the legislatures and called upon such of them as were members of the legislatures to resign their seats. The resolution on direct action, while appealing to 'the nation zealously to prosecute

the constructive programme' authorized 'the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary.' The resolution disposed of the communal tangle thus: No constitution should be acceptable to the Congress that did not give full safeguards to the minorities. As the year (1929) was ringing out, at midnight the whole Congress came out of the pavilion and unfurled the flag of complete independence.

'Purna Swarajya' (complete independence) was the climax of Congress demand, which had begun in 1885 with the ambition for minor reforms in the legislative councils. Clouds of the new demand must rise over the length and breadth of the country: this was the first resolution the Working Committee of the 1929 Congress adopted early in January 1930. It sent round circular letters to the provincial Congress committees asking them to organize Independence Day meetings on Sunday, January 26. The Working Committee's resolution, in the form of a pledge, was asked to be repeated by the audiences. It said: 'We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom, but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses and also ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe further that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.' The resolution, which was quite long, gave details of how customs and currency had been manipulated to help British trade, the right of free expression of opinion and association had been denied to Indians, complete disarmament had made Indians unmanly. The pledge in conclusion said: 'We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence even under provocation,

the end of this inhuman rule is assured.'

The pledge-reading at public meetings came as a foretaste of the response that lay in store to the impending movement. There was no vagueness of the Khilafat movement. The issue was clear: India like any other country must be the mistress of her own house; and the people were stirred by the new call. Mammoth meetings were held, and to the singing of Bande-Mataram, the Congress's national anthem, the tri-colour flag was hoisted and saluted reverentially by the multitude.

Gandhi now applied himself to the preliminaries of the movement. As was his way, his first preliminary was to put Government in the wrong and let the people say so spontaneously. He published an article in *Young India*, in which he offered the following terms to the Viceroy and made a promise that if they were acceptable to Government, there would be no talk of civil disobedience: (1) Excise revenues should be abandoned, and there should be total prohibition. (2) The rupee ratio should be reduced to 1s. 4d. (3) Land revenues should be reduced by half and made a subject of legislative control. (4) The salt tax should be abolished. (5) Military expenditure should be reduced at least by 50 per cent to begin with. (6) Salaries of the highest grade services should be reduced by half or less so as to suit the reduced revenues. (7) Protective tariff should be imposed on foreign cloth. (8) All political prisoners, save those condemned for murder or convicted of attempt to murder, should be discharged; all political prosecutions should be withdrawn; section 124-A and Regulation III of 1818 should be abrogated; and all Indian exiles should be permitted to return.

Acceptance of these demands would have amounted to considerable slashing of the object for which the British held India. Their non-acceptance would naturally expose the rulers as exploiters and challenge the Indian people that their sufferings would not be alleviated until they threw out the British and were free to manage their affairs themselves. As was expected, Government made no response. On the contrary they put in motion their machinery of repression. Men of the intelligence department were deployed all over the country, and on the basis of their reports of public speeches many Con-

gressmen were arrested. The most prominent among those arrested in the first round was Subhas Chandra Bose, who was regarded as dangerous by the Government of Bengal.

The door which Gandhi believed could lead to peace, having been banged, he gave thought to the content of the movement, which he was to lead and guide under the authority given by the Working Committee. One of the bad laws, which he regarded as most oppressive, was the Salt Law. It affected, Gandhi said, the meanest being in the land. The law would have to be publicly violated, he told the country. The beginning would be made by himself and some of his immediate followers and restricted to them until he was arrested or until he gave a call for mass defiance of the law. Before launching the movement he wrote a letter to the Viceroy on March 2, 1930 and sent it through an Englishman, Reginald Reynolds, who had for some time been living with him in his Sabarmati Ashram. The letter asked a question: 'Why do I regard the British Rule as a curse?' And Gandhi answered it thus:

> It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford. It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture, and, by the policy of disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually. Lacking the inward strength, we have been reduced, by all but universal disarmament, to a state bordering on cowardly helplessness.
>
> In common with many of my countrymen I had hugged the fond hope that the proposed Round Table Conference might furnish a solution. But when you said plainly that you could not give any assurance that you or the British Cabinet would pledge yourselves to support a scheme of full Dominion Status, the Round Table Conference could not possibly furnish the solution for which vocal India is consciously and the dumb millions are unconsciously thirsting.
>
> It seems as clear as day light that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British

policy that might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India or require an impartial and close scrutiny of British transactions with India. If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation, India must be bled with an ever increasing speed.

Not only, then, has the Land Revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him, if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man, both individually and collectively.

The inequities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over Rs. 21,000 per month, besides many other indirect additions. The British Prime Minister gets £5,000 per year i.e., over Rs. 5,400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over Rs. 700 per day against India's average income of nearly Annas 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income. On bended knees, I ask you to ponder this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration.

This means a transformation of the scheme of government. This transformation is impossible without independence, hence, in my opinion, the spontaneous demonstration of January 26, in which hundreds of thousands

> of villagers instinctively participated. To them Independence means deliverance from the killing weight.
>
> Nevertheless, if India is to live as a nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief. The proposed conference is certainly not the remedy.

Gandhi then apprised the Viceroy of his plan of civil disobedience: 'But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your ear, I shall proceed, with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the salt laws. I regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint. As the Independence Movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil. The wonder is that we have submitted to the cruel monopoly for so long. It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me and, in the act of disobeying the Salt Act, to lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute Book.

'I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment or any at all so far as I can help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter and if you will care to discuss matters with me and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you. You will, however, do me the favour not to deflect me from my course unless you can see your way to conform to the substance of this letter.'

The Viceroy made a brief reply in which he regretted that Gandhi was 'contemplating a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of law and danger to the public peace.' And Gandhi in his rejoinder said: 'On bended knees I asked for bread and received a stone instead. The English nation responds only to force and I am not surprised by the viceregal reply. The only public peace the nation knows is the peace of public prison. India is a vast prison house. I

repudiate this law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the nation for want of free vent.'

There was to be no more waiting. The start was made according to the plan on March 12, when Gandhi with 75 companions set out on a 200-mile journey to reach the Dandi beach, where, by picking salt, the Salt Law would be publicly broken. The departure of the saint is one of the most memorable events in Indian history. The newspapers having already announced the programme, the entire nation reverberated with talks about the Dandi march and it appeared as if the waves were carrying to Gandhi the feelings of devotion or obedience, Gandhi who to most men, women and children was a phenomenon. About 75,000 people came from the neighbouring areas to give him a respectful send-off and promise that they would not rest nor give Government peace until India was free. Gandhi told them: 'Now the die is cast and there is no turning back; you have to vindicate Gandhi's choice of your Taluka as the scene of his first experiment in mass civil disobedience.... I know some of you are afraid of your lands being confiscated. What is confiscation? Will they take away the lands to England? Rest assured when you allow your lands to be confiscated the whole of Gujarat will be at your back.'

The journey was to be covered on foot by stages in 24 days. What should the country do in the event of his arrest? He wrote an article giving instructions to the civil resisters: 'This time on my arrest there is to be no mute passive non-violence, but non-violence of the activist type should be set in motion so that not a single believer in non-violence as an article of faith for the purpose of achieving India's goal should find himself free or alive at the end of the effort to submit any longer to the existing slavery. It would be, therefore, the duty of every one to take up this civil disobedience or civil resistance as may be advised or conducted by my successors or may be taken up by the Congress. I must confess that at the present moment I have no all-India successor.... Every one will be expected to stand at his post except when called by his chief. If there is spontaneous mass response as I hope

there will be and if experience is any guide, it will largely be self-regulated. But every one who accepts non-violence whether as an article of faith or policy would assist the mass movement. Mass movements all over the world create unexpected leaders. Whilst, therefore, every effort imaginable and possible should be made to restrain the forces of violence, civil disobedience once begun this time cannot be stopped and must not be stopped so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive. A votary of satyagraha should find himself in one of the following states: (1) in prison or in an analogous state, or (2) engaged in civil disobedience, or (3) under orders at the spinning wheel or some constructive work advancing swaraj.'

The march of Gandhi's small party had the halo of a huge procession of a victorious army announcing to the nation the accomplishment of a noble mission. Vallabhbhai Patel had been moving in advance as harbinger of Gandhi's arrival; and although he was arrested, his work—the broadcasting—did not suffer. Men and women in their thousands gathered together on either side of the road throughout the journey to have a glimpse of the party and benediction from Gandhi. At one place 200 village revenue officials resigned their posts after listening to him.

The journey was so scheduled that the party should reach Dandi on April 5, and break the law on April 6, the unforgetable date of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. That day was fixed by Gandhi for law-breaking throughout the country. At the appointed time Gandhi and his companions reached the beach and picked up salt lying there—under the monopoly law it belonged to Government. There was no police interference; none was arrested. And Gandhi issued a press statement saying: 'Now that the technical or synonymous breach of the law has been committed, it is open to anyone who will take the risk of prosecution under the Salt Law to manufacture salt wherever he wishes and wherever it is convenient. My advice is that workers should everywhere manufacture salt, and where they know how to prepare clean salt make use of it and instruct the villagers likewise, telling the villagers at the same time that they run the risk of being prosecuted.... It

should be made obviously clear to the villagers that the breach is open and in no way stealthy.'

The accumulated enthusiasm, which each day of Gandhi's march was filling in the people, burst out on April 6, and then it was the old story over again: processions, public-meetings, police firing, lathi charges, arrests, convictions, confiscation of property, new ordinances, hartals, strikes in mills, suppression of newspapers. The ordinances and prohibitions turned out to be an incentive to the movement as 'the civil resistance took the form of doing the very thing that the ordinances were intended to stop.' Never was a law of the land defied in towns and villages of India as the salt law. Groups of men and women would come together, bring saline earth and prepare salt despite the fact that the commodity prepared was costlier than the market price; the object was to break the law. The groups were either dispersed with lathi blows or arrested. With the accused taking no part in the trials, the conviction was easy to announce.

As the movement advanced repression grew, the authorities behaving as if British rule was being uprooted and must be retained even by barbarous methods. An idea of the atrocities can be had from a letter Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy in the course of the movement: 'I had hoped that the Government would fight the civil resisters in a civilised manner. I could have had nothing to say if, in dealing with the civil resisters, the Government had satisfied itself with applying the ordinary processes of law. Instead, whilst the known leaders have been dealt with more or less according to the legal formality, the rank and file have been often savagely, and in some cases, even indecently assaulted. Had those been isolated cases, they might have been overlooked. But accounts have come to me from Bengal, Bihar, Utkal, U. P., Delhi and Bombay confirming the experiences of Gujarat of which I have ample evidence at my disposal. In Karachi, Peshawar and Madras, the firing would appear to have been unprovoked and unnecessary. Bones have been broken, private parts have been squeezed for the purpose of making volunteers give up, to the Government valueless, to the volunteers precious, salt. At Mathura an assistant magistrate is said to have snatched the national flag

from a ten year old boy. The crowd that demanded restoration of the flag thus illegally seized is reported to have been mercilessly beaten back. In Bengal there seems to have been only a few prosecutions and assaults about salt, but unthinkable cruelties are said to have been practised in the act of snatching flags from volunteers. Paddy fields are reported to have been burnt, eatables forcibly taken. A vegetable market in Gujarat has been raided because the dealers would not sell vegetables to officials.'

The part played by the Press in the movement was vital. Newspapers were the medium through which Gandhi announced his programme, through which the people knew of police atrocities, and through which law-breaking activities and other activities of the movement were reported. Editorial comments of many newspapers were an encouragement to law-breaking and condemnatory of Government. The authorities decided that the Press would not be allowed so much freedom and issued an ordinance on April 27, by which the provisions of the Press Act of 1910 were revived. This measure too was invoked by Gandhi to the aid of his movement. He advised pressmen and publishers 'to refuse to furnish security, and if they are called upon to do so, either to cease publication or challenge the authorities to confiscate whatever they like. When freedom is actually knocking at our doors and when, for the sake of wooing it, thousands have suffered torture, let it not be said of Press representatives that they were weighed and found wanting.' The publishers of Gandhi's paper, *Young India*, when called upon to furnish a security, stopped using press and began issuing the journal in cyclostyle. Out of the 131 newspapers (existing or to be started) from which security was demanded, 88 either stopped publication or did not start. The readers were asked by the Working Committee 'to boycott all Anglo-Indian and Indian papers which continue publication' after the demand of security. The boycott was effective for a while, but could not last because the public demand for news was so great that readers would go in for any available paper. So most of the papers drifted back to publication.

Whether the press retained or lost its freedom, the civil disobedience movement was bound to march on and on. Early

in the first week of May, Gandhi again gave the Viceroy intimation of his second march, this time the pronounced aim being to take possession of the Dharsana Salt Works. In the letter Gandhi asked the Viceroy 'to remove the salt tax which many of your illustrious countrymen have condemned in unmeasured terms and which, as you could not have failed to observe, has evoked universal protest and resentment.' This time the march was not to be tolerated, and Gandhi was arrested at 1 a.m. on May 5, and taken to the Yervada prison.

The repercussions, to the dismay of Government, were far in excess of the expectations. Business was suspended in most towns and in Bombay over 50,000 mill workers came out to join the demonstrators in the streets. There was zeal and defiance in the air one breathed, and as the news of the mill strike reached the Railway workshops the workers refused to work and downed the tools. Most processions were peaceful, but at Sholapur the crowd set fire to six police outposts. Firing by police was the natural corollary. It was a firing to kill, and 25 of the crowd fell dead and a hundred sustained injuries. Firing was resorted to at Howrah also.

The most conspicuous repercussion was to be seen at Dharsana; many men and women took a vow that the object of Gandhi's mission would be stuck to and the Dharsana Salt Works would be raided. The Works were raided again and again despite arrests and beatings. Hundreds would come forward in batches to court arrest and take the beating. The biggest raid took place on May 21, when 2,500 volunteers, drawn from different parts of Gujarat, rushed in disciplined array towards the Salt Works. Police attack on this occasion was the severest: 290 were injured and two of them succumbed to their injuries. The following is a sample of the accounts of police attacks; it is by an English journalist, Webb Miller, which he sent to his paper, *New Freeman*: 'In eighteen years of reporting in twenty-two countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable disturbances, riots, street fights and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana. Sometimes the scenes were so painful that I had to turn away momentarily. One surprising feature was the discipline of the volunteers. It seemed they were thoroughly

imbued with Gandhi's non-violence.' Police atrocities, according to the Working Committee's resolution (June 4, 1930), included 'among others, beating of satyagrahis with lathis until they dropped down unconscious and thereafter trampling their bodies by hoofs of horses ridden by European officers, striping satyagrahis naked and thrusting sticks into their private parts, driving Babul thorns into the body of a young lad and striking heavy blows on the scrotum.'

Another place which was also raided again and again by volunteers and which presented similar scenes was the Wadala Salt Depot. As if every sound of firing were a clarion call by the motherland and every shriek of pain from the injured a wave of enthusiasm, the raiding parties at the Wadala Salt Depot were more numerous. One of them consisted of nearly 15,000.

The cases of police brutalities will fill a volume. A few more samples may however be given. A French lady, touring India then, wrote an account of what she saw. She says:

> That the police, even under English officers, often meant to inflict physical punishment for disaffection, I could not doubt. At Calcutta some students, witnessing from a balcony of the University the brutal beating of participants in a peaceful procession, shouted "cowards". Two hours later the police returned, rushed into the University under an English officer, invaded the class-room, and beat the students indiscriminately as they sat at their desks till the walls were spattered with blood. The University made an official protest, but no punishment followed.... A similar affair occurred at Lahore where the police, again under an English officer, invaded a college and beat not only students in the class but the professors also. The excuse in this case was that some students belonging, I was assured, to another college had been 'peaceful pickets' in the streets. At Contai in Bengal five villagers were pushed into a tank and drowned during the dispersal of a crowd which seems to have been harmless. At Meerut I met a leading lawyer who was the chief speaker at a dispersed meeting. While under arrest he was beaten, and

in this position a policemen shot him at close range, so that his arm had to be amputated.

About the happenings in Gujarat, where peasants had refused payment of land revenue, she says:

> Of police brutality in the villages of Gujarat, I had ample evidence, for I spent five days touring them. The legal repression, to begin with, was sufficiently harsh. The peasants, almost to a man, in the Bardoli and Kaira* district were refusing—from a mixture of motives, personal devotion to Gandhi, desire for Swaraj, and economic distress due to the terrific fall in agricultural prices—to pay the land tax. The reply is to confiscate their fields, buffaloes, irrigation pumps, etc., and these are sold at nominal prices so that for a tax of Rs. 40 or so, a man may lose his all. Further, the usual date of collection was anticipated by three months so that peasants who had already paid the two instalments due for 1930 were required last October to pay the instalment normally due in January 1931. All this may have been just legal, but it was provocatively severe. On top of it came physical terrorism. The police, armed with rifles and lathis, made a practice of surrounding the disaffected villages and beating the peasants indiscriminately with the lathi or the butt-end of a rifle. I have forty-five narratives given to me personally by the victims, and in all but two cases, I saw their wounds and bruises (one girl was too modest to show them). Some of these cases were serious; one man had a broken arm, another a thumb-joint cut to the bone, while others had their whole bodies covered with marks. Other cases which I could not verify were in a distant hospital. The motive was sometimes to extort the tax, and occasionally it was paid after a beating and the seizure of a buffalo, though by the normal reckoning it was not yet due. I have the statements of several men who themselves were not taxpayers, but were compelled after a beating to pay an absent neighbour's tax. The national flags in one village

*Kheda

> were torn down from trees and houses together with Congress placards and eight peasants beaten, apparently because their houses were near these symbols. In two cases a man was beaten till he removed his Gandhi cap. In another instance, a man was beaten (twelve lathi blows) till he saluted the police seven times. A frequent police joke was to say 'Do you want Swaraj? Then, here it is'. and down would come the lathi. Worst of all, the Indian officials (both civilian and police officers) were engaged in an effort to rouse the Barias, classed in the census as a 'criminal tribe' against the yeoman class (patidars). There was direct incitement to beat them, to refuse to pay debts, even to burn their houses. For this I had the evidence of five Barias in different villages.
>
> I met two of the local Indian officials and had a chance of observing their ways; one of them in my presence perpetrated an act of wanton physical brutality. Finally, I saw the cage in which he kept his untried prisoners at Borsad. It was an open den of the zoo type with iron bars and measured about thirty feet square. In it, day and night, lived eighteen politicals, and one of them had spent six weeks in it without books or work. From this crowded cage, the prisoners were let out only once a day and only for three quarters of an hour to wash and visit the latrines.

In Bardoli and Borsad talukas of Gujarat, police oppression was so terrible that some 80,000 people migrated from British territory to the neighbouring Baroda state. Brailsford has given an account of the oppression:

> One scene I managed after much questioning to reconstruct. It happened in the abandoned village of Afwa. Here some peasants who own no land had remained behind, and with them were some who had returned from Baroda to cultivate their fields. On October 21 at about 3 a.m., a car arrived with ten policemen under a certain sub-inspector. The police found these men sleeping in the fields. They beat them and then demanded the tax.

> They were then brought before this sub-inspector, who beat some of them with his own hand and kicked others. One was still limping and another showed a painful swelling. The heads of two brothers he knocked together. They were then taken in a lorry to the lock-up of Bardoli. There the sub-inspector threatened with unprintable details to 'make them useless to their wives'. That threat told and the younger brother, though not himself a landowner, paid the tax for his father's farm. In another case a passer-by from another village was seized and beaten and the money in his pocket picked. A receipt was given in the name of a tax-payer and the stranger was told to recover it from him.

Borsad saw the last of the police hell on January 21, 1931, when 'ladies were thrown down and the policemen trod upon their chests with their boots.'

As was officially admitted in *India in 1930-31*, the no-rent campaign in Gujarat was a considerable success. It was after the arrest of Gandhi that the Working Committee had extended the scope of the movement to include non-payment of taxes, particularly the land tax. The committee also permitted forest laws to be defined in the Central Provinces and similar other distressing laws in other provinces. It also called upon the police and troops to disobey Government orders. Both police and troops were with the rulers for their bread and there was no response. The Working Committee also asked the people 'to organize and enforce a strict social boycott of all Government officials and others known to have participated directly in the atrocities committed upon the people to stifle the national movement.' To this also there was no response; and on June 30, the Working Committee was declared an unlawful body, and the acting Congress President, Motilal Nehru—the President, Jawaharlal Nehru, having already been arrested in April—was arrested. In most provinces the provincial Congress committees and in most districts district committees were also made illegal.

But despite the absence of leaders the no-tax campaign was launched in several provinces with a considerable measure of

success. Of all the provinces the response in Karnatak was the brightest and the peasants' suffering too was the severest. Here is district and taluka-wise account: In Kanara district 800 families were made paupers. In Siddapur and Ankola talukas 800 persons including 100 women were sentenced to jail terms, 2,000 acres of land were forfeited, 166 houses with their movable property were attached; their value, together with the loss of crops, amounted to Rs. 1,500,000. Thirty-four ladies of Siddapur fasted at the doors of the people who had bought the confiscated properties, the longest fast being of 31 days. In Bihar the *chowkidari* tax was withheld in a large number of areas, which were punished with punitive tax and confiscation of properties. In the Central Provinces hundreds of people ceremoniously broke the forest laws. They were beaten and tortured, and the breach of law was avenged by heavy fines. In U. P. the campaign was not very successful, but according to the official account (*India in 1930-31*), it 'had begun to affect the population over large tracts of country'.

To render aid to the injured and bleeding satyagrahis was, in the eyes of the authorities, a crime; and law-abiding citizens, who were not and did not intend to be in the movement, were prosecuted and punished as 'accomplices'. In vain did they protest that their only fault was to pick up the bleeding men from the streets after the police beating and give them shelter or food or water. In Contai a crowd of non-satyagrahis, watching the preparation of unlawful salt by the volunteers, was fired on. In Chenchna a retreating crowd was with vengeance fired on; six persons fell dead and 18 were wounded.

True to the commandment of their leaders, the people on the whole remained non-violent. There were however a few exceptions; one of them threatened to be quite serious. In the village of Gopinathpur the people, when they came to know of Congress volunteers having been mercilessly beaten by the police, arrested the policemen, locked them up in a school building, and set fire to it. But before the flames appeared two Congress volunteers, devotedly true to the vow of non-violence, broke open the door at no small risk to their own lives and rescued the policemen. In Midnapore two police choukidars were beaten to death by a crowd.

It was all an Indian affair: the satyagrahis were Indian, the firing and lathi-charging policemen were Indian, the men employed for torture work were Indian, policemen punished in retaliation were Indian. The officers, both British and Indian, issued orders and saw to it that they were carried out. Often they were carried out in excess of their content. And often policemen themselves took the initiative, for which the instigation of course came from higher authorities. In Madras when heavy fines failed to discourage the movement, policemen took the law into their own hands. The defiant crowds in the streets were dealt with then and there; they were given a sound beating and driven out of the streets. Those seen in bazaars in khaddar clothes or donning khaddar caps were beaten without any rhyme or reason. In Andhra, where military police had been posted, it was policemen's routine to march along the bazaar and beat every khaddar-wearer they met in the way. This routine ended only after the police met with resistance at Ellore which resulted in firing and death of two or three and injuries to five or six.

Events in the North-West Frontier Province took a different shape. The Frontier leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, had established an organization of volunteers, which he named the Khudai Khidmatgars (servants of God) or Red Shirts. Early in 1930 there was a large enrolment of Red Shirts, nearly all Muslims. While Muslims in many parts of India were holding aloof from the movement, a large number of sturdy Pathans responded to the Khan's call and joined it. A man of Gandhian purity, simplicity and determination, the Khan came to be known as Frontier Gandhi. He was credited with having accomplished a miracle—to convert the warlike Pathans to the creed of non-violence was a miracle indeed. The agility, discipline and smart uniform of the Red Shirts gave one an impression that the slightest provocation would make them shed their non-violence. This was a wrong impression. They were told by their leader that they had to work for the achievement of two objects: first, to free the country, and secondly to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. The Civil Disobedience Movement gave them an opportunity to show their mettle in fighting for these objects.

The Frontier struggle began thus: On April 22, 1930 a deputation of the All-India Congress Committee, despatched to the Frontier to inquire into the working of the Frontier penal regulations, was stopped by the authorities at Attock. When the news reached Peshawar the Pathans took out a procession in protest and held a public meeting. Early next morning nine leaders of the previous day's procession were arrested. A little later (at 9 a.m.) another two were taken into custody. The lorry in which they were being taken to the police station gave way. The two leaders undertook to present themselves at the police station, but as they proceeded a big crowd gathered around them, and forming itself into a procession, it accompanied the two men to the police station. The police station happened to be closed. Just then, two or three armoured cars came driving into the crowd and crushed '12 or 14 persons, six or seven of whom were instantaneously killed and the remaining seriously injured.' As if to add to the seriousness of what had happened, an Englishman came dashing on a motor cycle which accidentally collided with an armoured car. He was crushed. One of the cars also caught fire. These two incidents were attributed by officials to mob mischief; but the charge was stoutly denied by the public. There was no effort to find out the truth, and the other two armoured cars standing there opened fire on the crowd, which had refused to disperse unless it was allowed to remove the dead and the wounded and until the armoured cars and the troops were withdrawn. The crowd began to disperse but again gathered and the cars again fired. This went on with brief intervals for three hours. According to official figures, 30 persons were killed and 33 wounded; the non-official version put the casualties at seven to ten times these figures.

The Pathans would not withdraw whatever the consequences, and the authorities called out two platoons of the Royal Garhwal Rifles and ordered them to fire on until the crowds learnt a lesson not to assemble to defy Government. But it was Government which had to swallow another lesson. The soldiers refused to fire on an unarmed assembly knowing full well that they were committing a grave offence against military discipline. Army people had been approached by Congress

propaganda throughout the country to feel free—freedom was coming—and decline to serve alien rulers. There were a number of cases of Indian army's disobedience, but they did not receive publicity in the manner the case of the Royal Garhwal Rifles did. The police having failed to control the situation and the Garhwal soldiers having disobeyed orders, the authorities withdrew all police and troops from Peshawar and left the city to its own care. The leaders of the two Garhwal platoons were court-martialled; one was sentenced to transportation for life, one to 17 years rigorous imprisonment. and fifteen to terms varying from three to ten years. British authority was extinct in Peshawar from April 24 to May 4.

Even from this incident Gandhi emerged, as he did from the Chauri Chaura holocaust. as the world's unrivalled martinet, and captured the hearts of conscientious men of the world. He told a foreign correspondent (later): 'A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks an oath.' Congress call to soldiers was different: they were asked to tell their employers that in response to the nation's call, they would not serve them and come out; they were not to disobey while remaining in service.

Immediately after the Peshawar occurrences, symptoms of unrest appeared all along the Frontier from Hazara district to Dera Ismail Khan. The tribes began entertaining hope of seizing the Frontier territories from the British. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan having been arrested on April 23, the tribes were their own leaders and guides. In the second week of May about 4,000 Waziris attacked a British post. On June 3 an Afridi Lashkar of 5,000 strong advanced down the Bara and Bazar Valleys and assembled in the caves. On the night of June 4-5 about 2,000 of them invaded Peshawar district and a considerable number actually reached the outskirts of the city. Throughout June and July a considerable number of tribesmen were on the move and raiding villages in Peshawar district. There was an Afridi invasion on the night of August 7-8. Mullas were touring and inciting the tribesmen to insurrection. The authorities were suppressing the rising by air action. The situation was so tense that ordinary administration was difficult to re-establish and maintain. In August martial law was imposed and kept in force until the following

January. 'And the remarkable fact,' says the official report (*India in 1930-31*) 'that during the course of their numerous incursions into the settled districts, the tribesmen altogether abstained—except on two occasions—from looting in their customary manner the villages they passed through and that the Afridis, when negotiating a settlement with the authorities, put forward demands for the release of Gandhi and the repeal of the special ordinances in India, clearly showed that Congress agents had been active on the other side of the border also.'

In Mardan a fierce conflict took place on May 25 between a crowd and the police. The assistant superintendent of police, Murphy, was brutally done to death. Of the four districts affected in the Frontier Province, Bannu was probably the most turbulent. On April 8, as a protest against the arrest of a local Congress worker, Ram Singh, an angry crowd surrounded the city police station, destroyed the garden, and threw stones and mud at the Europeans playing golf nearby. On April 14 troops were posted at all the entrances to the city to prevent people from villages coming to the city for demonstration. As a protest against this the Congress Committee organized a general hartal for an indefinite period which however was abandoned on the 19th. But in July, owing to the rising of the tribes, the city gates were again closed and 440 pickets were arrested. They were picketing foreign cloth and liquor shops.

In August a Mullah, named Fazl-i-Quadir, collected an armed force and fired upon troops killing Captain Ashcroft of the 6th Royal Battalion and eight men of the platoon under his command. In the fighting which then ensued about forty men of the Mullah's force including himself were killed, thirty or so wounded, and eighty taken prisoner.

A bit of the Frontier's rebellious activity was witnessed in the Central Provinces also. In July, August and September, when there were mass demonstrations against the forest laws, there appeared symptoms of rising in tribal areas. On August 24 a police party was attacked in Betul district by the Gond tribes who had, in response to Congress call, been breaking the forest laws.

Among the more transient aspects of the Congress campaign during the second phase were the boycott of elections to the legislatures, demonstrations on November 12 against the Round Table Conference which was shortly to meet in London, and clashes between crowds and police. The most remarkable of them was the setting up in some places a parallel system of administration, such as Swaraj courts to decide legal cases. In November there was decline in the movement, but December was again quite vigorous. There were disturbances in many places, picketing was intensified, and public meetings again appeared like storm after the lull. And the Government's suppressive roller also appeared again. Twenty-six Congress committees including the Working Committee and their war councils and allied organizations and the Naujawan Bharat Sabhas, parties of young men, were declared as unlawful associations throughout the Punjab and U. P.

The Civil Disobedience Movement, according to Government's own admission, was a great success. Says *India in 1930-31*:

> The amount of popular support which the Congress obtained for its activities was greater than many competent authorities—on its own side as well as that of the Government—had supposed beforehand to be probable. By the beginning of July there was no province in British India which had been altogether immune from the effects of the Movement, and in all except two—Assam and the Central Provinces—the local Governments had at one time or another experienced considerable difficulty in dealing with the incidents to which it gave rise. After the first month or so the spectacular but somewhat fatuous demonstrations which had been staged in most of the larger towns to defy the Salt Law had begun to give place to other manifestations of Congress activity. In Bombay, where the Movement probably attained its greatest success, the local leaders at this stage organized a series of raids on the salt-pans along the adjacent beaches; but these activities came to an end with the arrival of the monsoon. Attention was then chiefly concentrated, as it

> already had been in other parts of the country, on the boycott of British goods and the picketing of cloth and liquor shops; and in both these directions the various provincial Congress organizations achieved a substantial measure of success. There were also wide-spread attempts to establish a boycott of Government servants and to incite the populace to refuse to pay taxes and land revenue, which caused the authorities concerned considerable anxiety, and some difficulty was also experienced as a result of Congress activities in universities and schools; endeavours were moreover made on the part of Congress workers to subvert the loyalty of the troops and the police, but these proved almost entirely fruitless.
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> The other source from which unexpected assistance came was the women. Thousands of them, many being of good family and high educational attainments, suddenly emerged from the seclusion of their homes and in some instances actually from purdah in order to join Congress demonstrations and assist in picketing.... By the end of the first three months the Civil Disobedience Movement had proved in many ways surprisingly successful, and the energy and resources of the Government were fully engaged in combating it.

In July, while the movement and Government repression were in full swing, two Liberal leaders, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar, addressed a letter to the Viceroy offering to make 'an endeavour to ameliorate the situation by discussing the question with some of the leaders of the Movement' in the hope of 'restoration of normal conditions'. The proposal was received agreeably by the Viceroy, who permitted the two Liberals to see Gandhi in Yeravada jail on July 23. They also met Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru in Naini jail on July 27. Letters exchanged between Gandhi and the Nehrus on peace proposals having made little progress, the Nehrus were taken to Yeravada jail for discussion with Gandhi and other members of the Working Committee, namely, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jairamdas Daulatram and Dr. Syed Mahmood, and a joint letter over the signatures of these leaders

was prepared on August 15, which though addressed to Sir Tej and Jayakar, was in fact meant for the Viceroy. The letter said that 'no solution will be satisfactory unless (a) it recognizes the right of India to secede at will from the British Empire, (b) it gives to India complete national Government responsible to her people including control of the defence forces and economic control and covers all the eleven points raised in Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy, and (c) it gives to India the right to refer, if necessary, to an independent tribunal such British claims with regard to India's public debt as may seem to the National Government to be not in the interest of India. They offered to call off the Civil Disobedience Movement if these terms were accepted by the Viceroy but asserted that 'picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops would continue and also the manufacture of salt; but there would be no raids on salt depots.' The two emissaries took this letter to the Viceroy, who on August 28, replied to them saying that he regarded 'discussion on the basis of the proposals contained in the letter as impossible'.

But the political condition could not be left simmering, and it was evident that a definite step would have to be taken to conciliate the Congress. The Viceroy had already announced in May that a Round Table Conference would meet in London about the end of October, and speakers in the July session of the central legislature had strongly urged that a peaceful atmosphere must be created before the Conference met by releasing Gandhi and other Congressmen. The Viceroy was in a quandary. There was no solution, and the Round Table Conference met without the Congress. The British Prime Minister, inaugurating it, made the following announcement bearing on the future constitution of India: 'The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the government of India should be placed upon the legislatures, central and provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances and also with such guarantees as are required by the minorities to protect their political liberties and rights.'

The Conference, whose Indian delegates were nominated by

the Viceroy, was denounced in the country as a body of British lackeys. Congress leaders—those not yet arrested or who had returned after serving their sentences—asked demonstrations to be organized against the delegates. Nationalist newspapers were advised not to print any account of the proceedings of the Conference. There were demonstrations and there was a black-out, which however did not last long. For some time the Conference news was played down, but as the days passed and the psychological effect of the ban began to disappear, it was given prominent display as the news of the day.

Another headache to Government was fast approaching—Independence Day celebrations on January 26 (1931). But before the midnight of that date Gandhi and members of the Working Committee were released. (Motilal Nehru had already been sent out on grounds of illness which proved fatal.) There was little change in Gandhi's attitude. Immediately after his release he said: 'The right of picketing could not be given up nor the right of the starving millions to manufacture salt.' This was enough hint to the Working Committee as to its programme in future. Meeting on January 31, and February 1 it resolved to continue the movement of civil disobedience, but issued instructions to the subordinate committees that no new campaigns should be organized. On February 14 Gandhi sought an interview with the Viceroy, and on the 17th the two had long discussions; the discussions continued for 15 days with brief intervals. For the first time in the history of political movements, a Viceroy concluded a pact with the leader of a law breaking movement.

Briefly the terms of the pact, commonly known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which was signed on March 15, were: (1) The Civil Disobedience Movement would be withdrawn. (2) the scheme for the constitutional government of India, being discussed at the Round Table Conference, would be considered further. (3) Congress representatives would take part in Round Table Conference discussions. (4) The Settlement would apply to the activities directly connected with the Movement. (5) All kinds of defiance to law would cease. (6) Boycott of British goods, as a political weapon, would be discontinued. (7) Picketing against the consumption of non-Indian

goods and intoxicants would be allowed provided it was not coercive. (8) There would be no public inquiry into the conduct of the police as 'it must inevitably lead to charges and counter-charges'. (9 to 11) Ordinances promulgated in connection with the Movement and notifications declaring political associations illegal would be withdrawn. (12) the pending prosecutions or proceedings would be withdrawn. (13) Civil Disobedience prisoners would be released. (14) Fines or securities, not yet realized, would be remitted. (15) The additional police would be withdrawn. (16) The movable property seized would be returned if still in possession of Government. (17) The immovable property, if not sold to third parties, would be returned. (18) Government would give redress in cases where it was established that realization of dues had not been made in accordance with the law. (19) Government would pursue a liberal policy in regard to the re-appointment of Government servants who had resigned during the Movement. (20) Regarding the picking of salt, Government, 'for the sake of giving relief to certain of the poorer classes,' would be 'prepared to extend their administrative provisions, on lines already prevailing in certain places, in order to permit local residents in villages immediately adjoining areas where salt can be collected or made, to such villages, but not for sale to or trading with individuals living outside them'. (21) In the event of the Congress failing to give full effect to the obligations of this settlement, Government would take necessary action for due observance of law and order.

The pact no doubt enabled the annual session to be held in nearly normal conditions in the last week of March, but the spirit for independence was to be kept in vigour though within the framework of the Pact. The Congress called for intensive boycott of foreign cloth and peaceful picketing. It drew up a list of fundamental rights and duties to be incorporated into the future constitution of India. And it nominated Gandhi to represent the Congress at the Round Table Conference with such other delegates as the Working Committee might appoint.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was an inconvenient document, not to the Congress but to the bureaucracy, which was now pinned down to a certain defined behaviour in dealing with the

men (Congressmen) who were in the past disposed of arbitrarily. The bureaucracy would have to put up with peaceful picketing which it never tolerated under any conditions and in regard to which it even ignored the law. It would have to prepare lists of dues collected illegally by officers, often with its connivance. It would have to behave as a party to the Pact, which would mean climbing down from the position of arrogance and inaccessible superiority. The bureaucracy would not submit to this humiliation, and most of its members continued behaving in the old fashion hallowed by a long tradition of British rule! In several provinces the district authorities, accustomed to carrying out the orders of their superiors with religious sanctity, ignored the Pact.

In East Godavari police opened fire on a small procession killing four persons and injuring some. The procession was peaceful; the only fault of the organizers was that they had put up a portrait of Gandhi on a motor car and did not remove it when the police ordered them to do so. In some towns and villages the people were ordered not to wear khaddar cap, the so-called Gandhi cap. Policemen continued breaking up public meetings, raiding the houses of Congress workers, burning the national flag, and insulting even women members of the Congress. In Bardoli, where there was no-revenue movement, Rs. 2.1 million out of a demand of Rs. 2.2 million had since been collected by the revenue staff, but they still resorted, as Gandhi complained to the Viceroy, to 'coercive processes, fines and display of the police who surrounded people's houses'. Hundreds of Congressmen and others were arrested on various excuses, mainly in U.P. In vain did Government servants, who had resigned during the Movement, appeal for their re-instatement under the terms of the Pact. Government also complained that Congressmen were not abiding by the Pact. Gandhi suggested a remedy—appointment of a permanent board of arbitration to decide questions of interpretation. It was not accepted by Government. He then suggested that the Government of India should advise local Governments to appoint a board of inquiry consisting of a nominee on their behalf and another on behalf of the Congress to conduct a summary inquiry into allegations on either side. This request was also turned down.

The situation called for rethinking by the Congress, and Gandhi telegraphically told the Viceroy that 'continuing harassment in U. P., Frontier Provinces, and other provinces,' seemed to indicate that he should not fail to participate in the deliberations of the Round Table Conference. There was another meeting and another pact with the Viceroy on August 27, 1931—the old Viceroy, Lord Irwin, had since retired and the Earl of Willingdon had taken his place. The new pact, among other things, stated: 'The settlement of March 5, 1931 remains operative. The Government of India and the local Governments will secure the observance of the specific provisions of the Settlement in those cases, if any, in which a breach is established and will give their careful consideration to any representation that may be made in this respect. The Congress will fulfil their obligations under the Settlement.' Government also undertook to inquire into the allegations of coercion in Bardoli taluka.

In a few days Gandhi left for London with Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sarojini Naidu as Congress delegation to the Round Table Conference but not without a taste of bitterness in their mouths. The delegation Gandhi and the Working Committee had proposed included Dr. Ansari (a Muslim). The Viceroy cut out this name arguing that the Muslim delegates to the R. T. C. were opposed to Dr. Ansari; they said that the Congress did not represent the Muslims. The Congress was a secular organization, but was made to look Hindu.

19

No-Tax Campaigns (1932-34) & the Reforms of 1935

Towards the close of 1931 another movement, without any predetermined plan, descended upon the Congress. Those were the days of an economic slump. Prices of agricultural produce, especially foodgrains, had considerably fallen. The peasants, those of U. P. particularly, were in great distress. Most villages in India were a scene of cross-purposes. The peasant was attached to the Congress; the zamindar looked upon Government as his benefactor. The two most vital pillars in the civil administration of India were the police and zamindars. Both committed excesses in making exactions; both broke the law with impunity, and Government tolerated them. The stoppage of land-rent in certain areas during the Civil Disobedience Movement and the zamindars' help to the authorities in making collections had lent further strength to the bond of mutual consideration between the two. The zamindars were emboldened by the pro-Congress tendency of the peasantry and resorted to ejectments and attachments. The prices of the land produce were so low that the peasant was unable to maintain his family and pay land rent and revenue. There were a few agrarian riots in U.P. when forcible attempts were made to collect rents. What was the distressed peasant to do? He had none in the world except the Congress to look to. The Congress came out.

The U. P. Government had, in response to appeals, announced an amount of remission in rents, but it was too small to mitigate the suffering. Jawaharlal Nehru took up the cause and had several interviews with the Government's chief secretary, but there was no result. U.P.'s agrarian problem was already very acute when Gandhi met the Viceroy before his

departure for England, and he had clearly stated that in the event of Government refusing to give adequate relief to U. P. peasants, the Congress would be duty-bound to advise defensive direct action or satyagraha to be restarted. But instead of easing the situation and as if to precipatate another no-rent campaign the Government came out with an announcement saying that if full rents were not paid within a month, the remissions allowed would be withdrawn, and that objections to the rent-demand, if any, should be made after it had been paid. Negotiations were again conducted on behalf of the U. P. Congress with the Government, but it remained adamant.

The show-down eventually came. In December the U. P. Congress Committee, with the concurrence of the Congress president, advised the peasantry to withhold rent and revenue. Government, as usual, proceeded to assume extraordinary powers. On the recommendation of the U. P. Government, the Viceroy promulgated on December 15 an ordinance—the United Provinces Emergency Powers Ordinance—'to provide against instigation to the illegal refusal of payment of certain liabilities and to confer special powers on the Government of the United Provinces and its officers for the purpose of maintaining law and order.' The ordinance also gave Government power to restrict movements of any person.

In U. P. the struggle, says Nehru, 'was centred in the rural areas,' and was 'far bigger and more disciplined than in 1930'. It 'brought suffering to scores of thousands of peasants; many were completely ruined by it.' In some districts 'for many months rent was withheld, and it was only early in summer (1932) probably that collections began to dribble in. Large numbers of arrests were made, but this was almost in spite of Government's policy. Generally, arrests were confined to special workers and village leaders. The others were merely beaten. Beating was found to be superior to prison as well as shooting. There were large numbers of ejectments, attachments and sale of cattle and property. With terrible anguish the peasants watched the little they possessed being taken away and disposed of for ridiculous prices.'

The North-West Frontier Province was again to come forward to make its very significant contribution to the movement. Khan

Abdul Ghaffar Khan, soon after his return from jail, resumed his organization of the Red Shirts. In his public speeches he would say that the Gandhi-Viceroy Pact was a mere truce and the struggle for independence would not stop. In the villages he visited, the roadsides were lined up with Red Shirt volunteers; drums were beaten, and at two places shots were fired as a salute. In the Frontier province as in U. P., the peasants were in a state of economic distress. The Khan told them that the revenue was a crushing burden and that they should pay as much as lay within their means. He demanded that the peasantry should be allowed a remission of 75 per cent, the remaining 25 per cent being paid in kind. Government made some reduction in the demand, but the Khan rejected it as thoroughly inadequate. And there was a no-rent movement. It became, as the days passed, a multi-sided affair—there were processions, public meetings, picketing, exhortations to the people to disobey Government orders. Government too re-invoked its old armoury of repression. An ordinance was promulgated to enable Government to arrest and imprison people without trial. Meetings and processions were broken up by lathi charge or firing. Dependable units of army and military police were kept in readiness so that they might be called out in the event of emergency to maintain British possession. On December 24 the Khan and his elder brother, Dr. Khan Saheb, with a number of Red Shirt workers were arrested. Apprehending serious repercussions in consequence of the arrests, the authorities deployed six mobile columns in the district of Peshawar. Thereafter the scene of trouble shifted to Kohat, where on the 26th large crowds proceeded towards the cantonment raising anti-Government slogans. They did not heed the warning to stop and disperse, and there came upon them showers of bullets, killing and injuring quite a number. The official estimate of the dead and injured was 14 and 30 respectively. Government authority in the Frontier was not humiliated this time to the extent it was done in 1930.

Bengal was the third province to come into the lime-light in the movement of 1932. Its story will have to be prefaced with an account of the terrorist movement. In April 1930 a band of 150 Bengali youths dressed in khaki, the leaders wearing officer's uniforms, attacked the police armoury, the Auxiliary

Force armoury, the European Club, and the telegraph and telephone offices in Chittagong and carried away some arms and ammunition. The raiders had been divided into four batches. The party attacking the Auxiliary Force armoury shot dead a Sergeant-Major and an Indian soldier. The building was set afire with petrol. While in the armoury, the man fired on all motor cars passing that way and killed a railway guard, the driver and assistant driver of a taxi, and a constable in the district magistrate's car. In all seven persons were killed and two injured. The telegraph office group, consisting of six men, seized the telephone operator and chloroformed him and hacked the telephone board to pieces. To ensure success, the men had, before setting out for the raid, cut telegraph wires over 27 miles from Chittagong.

About mid-night, when the raiders had made for some hills north of the town, a series of skirmishes occurred between them and the armed police, resulting in 19 of them and several policemen being killed. Five days later four young men were apprehended at Feni railway station on suspicion of being concerned with the Chittagong raid. The men, instead of surrendering, opened fire, wounding the sub-inspector of police and his two constables, and escaped.

Seven months later (December 1930) there was another case. Three members of a revolutionary party, dressed in European costume, rushed into the office of the Inspector-General of Prisons, Bengal, Lt.-Col. Simpson, and shot him dead. The men were chased, but before they could be overtaken, one of them killed himself by swallowing poison; two shot themselves, of whom one, Binoy Bose, died, and the other Dinesh Gupta, was put up for trial and hanged.

Early in 1931 the district magistrate of Midnapore and the district judge of Alipore were shot dead. Midnapore was a target of special attention; several district magistrates, one after another, were killed. Terrorism had been struggling for quite a few years to become a force. In 1930 there were a number of cases of bomb explosion, derailment of railway trains, and attempts to kill Government officers. Such attempts took place at Bombay, Howrah, Madras, Multan, Kanpur, Lahore, Lyallpur, Barisal, Amritsar, Gujranwala, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sheikhu-

pura, Delhi, Calcutta, Peshawar, Jhansi, Dacca, Mymensingh, Bannu, Rajashahi, Benares, Karachi, Jessore, Murshidabad, Khulna, Khurja, Allahabad, Ludhiana, Gujranwala, Hyderabad (Sind), and Chandpur (Bengal). In December 1930 shots were fired at the Governor of the Punjab and his party while they were attending the convocation of the Punjab University. The Governor received slight injuries, but those of a police officer proved fatal. In 1931 too there was a crop of bomb explosions and murders in Bengal, U. P., and the Punjab. An absconding revolutionary of U. P., Chandra Shekhar Azad, challenged the police while they were coming to arrest him in a park at Allahabad. He fired on them and they killed him by the returning fire. Several policemen were wounded.

Nevertheless, the province that constantly alarmed the rulers' nerves was Bengal, and the resumption of the civil disobedience movement in several provinces caused the Bengal Government added anxiety. It treated, says Nehru, 'the whole population (or, to be exact, the Hindu population) as hostile, and everyone —man, woman, boy or girl between 12 and 25—had to carry identity cards. There were externments and internments in the mass, dress was regulated, schools were regulated or closed, bicycles were not allowed, movements had to be reported to the police, curfew, sunset law, military marches, punitive police, collective fines, and host of other rules and regulations became the order of the day. Large areas seemed to be in a continuous state of siege, and the inhabitants were little better than ticket-of-leave men and women under the strictest surveillance.' Even non-official Englishmen, believing that they belonged to the ruling race, assumed the authority of the police to have the fun of oppression. For example, a party of them broke at night into the premises of a printing press and broke the machinery with hammers and iron rods and belaboured the manager and others. Several Indian-owned presses secretly printed revolutionary literature, and to angry Englishmen, any press establishment was a symbol of hostility to their nation.

There were agrarian no-tax movements in Gujarat and the Karnatak also. The peasant proprietors—different as a class from tenants in U. P.—refused to pay their revenue to the Government. As elsewhere, their things were attached and they

were beaten, but they did not lose courage and suffered with serenity.

What would happen in the country in the months to come was difficult to guess, and Government was terror-stricken. Repression and more repression was, it thought, the only remedy to maintain the show of authority and law and order. The tricolour flag, adopted by the Congress as India's national flag, was rightly regarded by Government as the symbol of the parallel authority that the Congress was indeed regarded by the people. It would not be tolerated anywhere, and orders were issued even to the so-called self-governing local bodies asking them to pull down the national flag from their buildings. Non-compliance with the order was threatened with severe action. Many municipal boards submitted to the threat and took down the flag.

In 1932 the hammer which struck at civic life was much heavier than that of 1930-31. Not only Congress organizations—the Working Committee, the provincial committees, and many district committees—but all manner of allied or sympathetic associations were declared unlawful. They included kisan sabhas (peasant bodies), youth leagues, student associations, advanced non-Congress political organizations, library associations. The lists announced by provincial Governments contained many hundreds of names, the all-India total running into several thousands. Government apprehension that all these bodies would contribute their mite to the anti-British movement was not unjustified. All those whose honesty was not tarnished by personal considerations were united in the urge that the British had no business to stay in India and that India must be free.

The British were fighting with their backs to the wall in the sense that the entire country, except those enjoying benefits from them, was behind the Congress. The business of life was going on as usual and out of millions only hundreds courted imprisonment, but it would be wrong to suppose that those who did not come out to offer resistance openly were for the British. Even Government servants, particularly in the lower rungs, whose loyalty was taken for granted until a few decades ago, had taken to swadeshi and helped the movement with their

small contributions of money. Often confidential instructions issued by Government to the authorities of law and order were passed on to Congress leaders. It was not rare for Congressmen to know in advance that their arrest had been ordered or that their houses would be searched. In the economic degeneration the British had brought about they had no doubt an ally—not many had the courage to leave Government jobs and take to a life of misery and starvation. But what mattered was the fact that everywhere there was one feeling, vocal or mute, that the British must go.

To strike terror was the only remedy left in British hands. Parents whose sons or daughters were found participating in the movement or in anti-Government demonstrations or reported by the intelligence department as having inclinations towards the Congress or a revolutionary party, were harassed and warned of bad consequences coming to them and to others of the family. C.I.D. reports against any Government servant were considered enough to warrant his removal; there was little room for further investigation. Policemen, whose very presence had been alarming to lower and middle classes, went to people (non-Congressmen) of nationalist inclinations and held out threats of their life being ruined. Men of position were summoned by district magistrates to their offices or residences and were sternly warned to 'behave', otherwise the big steam roller of power that Government possessed would crush them. Movable and immovable properties of the so-called law-breakers were auctioned for a pittance to set an example to the waverers that if they went over to the Congress, they too would be made pauper. Policemen and revenue officials moved through villages filthily abusing villagers and attempting to crush by violence the stamina for nationalism and assertion of their rights, which they had acquired from political leaders' exhortations. Part-time informers were appointed to listen to talks in Government offices, in social clubs, in street corners, and at other meeting places, and report them to the authorities concerned. In short no effort was spared to demoralise non-participants in Congress movements.

And those who participated were victimised, at times in a manner reminiscent of the barbarous ages. Even in gaols, whip-

ping became a frequent punishment. On April 27, 1933 the Under-Secretary of State for India stated in the House of Commons 'that over 500 persons in India were whipped during 1932 for offences in connection with the civil disobedience movement'. The figure was supplied to him by the Government of India and cannot be regarded as correct. Whipping was resorted to all over the country and not seldom without any legal authority. It was impossible to prepare statistics. The magistrate had largely ceased to be a fair administrator of the law and had become part of the suppressive machinery which was not always scrupulous about the rule of law.

The authorities in some provinces issued confidential instructions to jail officials asking them that political prisoners must be 'dealt with grimly'. Political prisoners were huddled together with long-term hardened criminals, the latter being incited to be rude to them. As a rule the jail staff made money from prisoners' diet allowance and supplied much inferior food to what was prescribed in the jail manual. And when political prisoners, being conscious of their rights, protested and staged demonstrations, they were lathi-charged or fired upon. Deaths and injuries in such cases were not a rare result. Official inquiries that usually followed almost always vindicated the action of the jail authorities. That such inquiries were bound to be partial was proved once in 1932 when a case of firing in the Hijli detention camp, in which one detenu was killed and many were wounded, became a subject of vehement discussion outside the camp, and the Government of Bengal had to order a judicial inquiry. The inquiry committee consisted of high judicial officers. They held that the fault was largely that of the jail staff and the firing was unjustified. The Government communique, issued previously, was thus entirely falsified. Demonstrations in jails for the redress of the prisoners' grievances were usually characterised by Government as 'riots' in which, curiously enough, only prisoners were killed or injured! And yet the prisoners were accused as aggressors!

The coming out of women to court arrest was a new development in Indian life—women who by tradition kept themselves indoors. Its effect was bound to be felt by men who were not prepared for a hard life in jail; this challenge to man, Govern-

ment felt, must be ridiculed. Women prisoners, excepting a few, were classed as 'ordinary prisoners and placed with the most degraded of companions, and often under horrid conditions.' Jawaharlal Nehru says: 'I was once lodged in a barrack next to a female enclosure, a wall separating us. In that enclosure there were, besides other convicts, some women political prisoners including one who had been my hostess and in whose house I had once stayed. A high wall separated us, but it did not prevent me from listening in horror to the language and curses which our friends had to put up with from the women convict warders.' Nehru further says: 'Soon after my sister's arrest and conviction, a number of young girls, mostly 15 or 16 years old, met in Allahabad to discuss what they could do. They had no experience but were full of enthusiasm and wanted advice. They were arrested as they were meeting in a private house and each of them was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. This was a minor incident, one of the many that were occurring all over India from day to day. Most of the girls and women who were sentenced had a very bad time in prison, even worse than the men had. I heard of many painful instances, but the most extraordinary account that I saw was the one prepared by Miraben (Madeleine Slade) giving her experiences together with those of other civil disobedience prisoners in a Bombay gaol.'

To demoralise jail-goers was Government policy in order to undermine the movement. The authorities would give the hardest of labour—mills, oil-presses, etc.—to men in prison and then hold out the temptation of securing release by making an apology for the past conduct. The overwhelming majority of political prisoners scornfully rejected such temptations, preferring torture and physical discomfort to an easy life outside. The cases of such escape by apology were very few. 'It was very noticeable', says Nehru, 'that the treatment of political prisoners in 1932 and 1933 was worse than it had been two years earlier in 1930. This could not have been due merely to the whims of individual officers, and the only reasonable inference seems to be that this was the deliberate policy of the Government.... We had an interesting instance of this from an unimpeachable source. A distinguished gaol visitor, a gallant knight, not a

rebel and a sedition-monger like us. but one whom the Government had delighted to honour, paid us a visit once in prison. He told us that some months earlier he had visited another gaol and in his inspection note had described the gaoler as a "Humane disciplinarian". The gaoler in question begged him not to say anything about his humanity as this was at a discount in official circles. But the knight insisted as he could not conceive that any harm would befall the gaoler because of his description. Result: soon after the gaoler was transferred to a distant and out-of-the-way place, which was in the nature of a punishment to him. Some gaolers, who were considered to be particularly fierce and unscrupulus, were promoted and given titles.'

It was perhaps in pursuance of a policy to deliberately humiliate and insult relatives of political prisoners availing themselves of the periodical interviews. They were made to feel that their position was worse than that of the relatives of ordinary convicts. Once Nehru's mother, wife and daughter were similarly 'insulted and hustled out, when they had gone to interview his brother-in-law, and in protest he decided to give up all interviews.

No effort, decent or indecent, legal or illegal, was to be spared to suppress expressions of national feelings, whether by word of mouth or by deed. Khaddar was adopted by the Congress at the instance of Gandhi because of its economic significance in national life, but it had become inseparably associated with politics of the day, and any khaddar-wearer, whether he belonged to the Congress or any other political party or not, would be stopped by policemen and abused or slapped; he was even detained in the lock-up for a while. If he promised to give up his 'political' dress, he would be allowed to go with a reprimand; if he refused to give the promise, his name was noted in the register of suspects and he was punished in future on any excuse. It was not unusual for the policemen to remove and snatch the khaddar cap from the head of a passer-by.

In the fight between the Congress and Government, harmless citizens had also at times to suffer the consequences. Extra police posted in an area that had been politically very active would be charged to the people of that area and the cost was realized as a punitive tax. In vain did the people grumble and

pray that they had taken no part, direct or indirect, in the movement. Those who repeated their murmurs were abused and even kicked off. Magistrates and police had been given extraordinary powers to deal with the situation as they liked; their wish was law. There was little civil liberty left; both person and property could be seized by the authorities. A state of siege existed throughout the country. It was a common practice to impose heavy collective fines on villages and occasionally on towns.

The country was kept under control by means of ordinances—Emergency Powers Ordinance, Unlawful Instigation Ordinance, Unlawful Association Ordinance, Prevention of Molestation and Boycott Ordinance. They gave the authorities such wide powers that ordinary law of the land seemed virtually to have been suspended. Even the Secretary of State for India admitted in the House of Commons (March 26, 1932) that these were very drastic and severe but explained that they were drawn in that comprehensive form because 'the Government, with the full knowledge at their disposal, sincerely believed that they were threatened with an attack on the whole basis of Government and that the Ordinances were essential if India was to be prevented from drifting into anarchy.'

The vast movement of 1932-33, it might be contended, was thrust upon the Congress by Government. Maybe the Government was on the defensive. On his return from London towards the close of December 1931, Gandhi sought an interview with the Viceroy with a view to exploring the possibility of settling agrarian affairs in U. P. and the North-West Frontier Province peacefully. The Viceroy's private secretary informed Gandhi that an interview would be allowed on the condition that the measures which Government had adopted to meet the political situation would not be drawn into discussion. It was those measures that had compelled the Congress to resort to the no-tax movement, and there would have been little sense in an interview from which they were excluded. The Working Committee therefore adopted a resolution deciding to resume the civil disobedience movement. And when the Viceroy was informed of it by Gandhi in the belief that he might revise his earlier reply and agree for a discussion, his private secretary

wrote back saying: 'His Excellency and his Government can hardly believe that you or the Working Committee contemplate that His Excellency can invite you, with the hope of any advantage, to an interview held under the threat of resumption of civil disobedience.' As if to give the movement the signal to start, Government arrested Gandhi on January 4, 1932 together with the Congress President, Vallabhbhai Patel, after the former's last telegram (January 3) to the Viceroy, informing him that the movement would now be resumed and 'that every endeavour will be made on the part of the Congress to carry on the struggle without malice and in strictly non-violent manner.' There was no malice on the part of the Congress; there was plenty of it on the part of Government.

The new movement took different forms in different provinces. U. P. and Bengal carried on a no-rent campaign; Bihar withheld the chaukidari tax; the Central Provinces, Karnatak, and some places of U. P., Madras and Bihar disobeyed the forest laws. Contraband salt was collected and sold in many places. Picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops was resumed with redoubled zeal. According to an official account 'the most successful activity of the Congess was undoubtedly the non-militant boycott. It attained considerable success as directed against British goods but little as against institutions.' Another feature of the movement was the observance of particular 'days' in celebration of selected events, such as Independence Day, Gandhi Day, Motilal Nehru Day, Frontier Day, Martyrs Day, Flag Day.

One of the activities adopted by Congress organizations in the course of the movement was necessitated by Government depriving them of postal and telegraph services. Congress offices that had gone underground started their own mail services in contravention of the law; Congress postal peons found effecting deliveries were arrested. In the absence of leaders, who had all been rounded up, men of second or third rank ran the organizations and continued publishing and distributing Congress literature secretly. Those found in underground offices were given severe beating on their refusal to disclose where Congress papers and books, such as lists of subscriptions, had been hidden. A High Court advocate, who had declined to give

out his name and address, was subjected to the torture of his hair being plucked one by one. Some of the Congress offices and ashrams seized by the police were demolished or burnt.

In the first three months of the movement about 40,000 persons were arrested. From April there was progressive decline in the monthly totals.

Now came the time for the annual session of the Congress which had been fixed for April 24, 1932 at Delhi. Government would not allow it and made all conceivable arrangements to stop it. As the first preventive step, the reception committee was declared unlawful, and all members of the committee residing in Delhi were taken into custody. Instructions were sent round to all districts in India that delegates for the Delhi Congress should be arrested while leaving for the venue. This was done as far as practicable. All dharmashalas and hotels in the city of Delhi were warned under the threat of heavy penalities against lodging Congress delegates. The president designate, Madan Mohan Malaviya, was arrested while entering Delhi. The acting president, Sarojini Naidu, was arrested in Bombay and so were more than half of the 40 members she had nominated to constitute the subjects committee. Despite all precautions taken by Government, the rest of the subjects committee members managed to reach Delhi, and at a formal meeting on April 23, discharged the committee's customary function: it gave formal approval to certain resolutions to be moved before the open session.

What happened next day is described thus in the official record of the Congress, *Indian National Congress 1930-31*: 'On April 24 batches of policemen were marching from one end of the Chandni Chowk to the other and mounted sawars and armed police in lorries maintained constant patrol throughout the city. All the likely places of meeting were strictly guarded. Exactly at 9 a.m. however four hundred Congress delegates from all parts of India gathered on the historic open ground under the Clock Tower at Chandni Chowk and unanimously adopted the resolutions recommended by the subjects committee. The session lasted about ten minutes during which the resolutions were passed and copies of the address of the chairman of the reception committee, of the annual report of the Congress

and of Congress resolutions were distributed among the assembled delegates and the crowd that had collected there. Before long the police arrived on the scene and forming a cordon round the meeting arrested about 300 delegates. The police were so taken aback that they forgot to declare the meeting illegal before making the arrests. This was followed by a series of small processions and arrests. Delegates began to arrive at Chandni Chowk in batches of half a dozen and were all arrested. Soon the authorities realized that if they went on arresting, there would be no end of people offering themselves. In the afternoon they took to lathi-charging the batches that came to the Tower for arrest.'

The Delhi Congress accounted for 650 arrests in Delhi itself, 160 in Moradabad (the junction joining Delhi with several branch lines), and 500 in the rest of the country. The arrest of every eminent leader was condemned by the country by a day's hartal with most towns suspending their business activity and attending protest meetings in the evening. This practice was observed throughout the long spell of freedom movements.

While the movement was continuing with a downward tempo, an announcement came from London—a mischievous announcement according to the interpretation put on it by Indian nationalism—obliging Gandhi to declare a fast unto death. He said he would end his life rather than submit to it. The Round Table Conference had been going ahead with its deliberations in the course of which the most contentious question of communal electorates naturally came up. The delegates the Viceroy had nominated could not, in most cases, be regarded as representing the people. Moreover, since they were chosen as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Depressed Class Hindus, their sense of duty gravitated towards an advocacy of 'adequate' representation in the future legislatures for the communities they respectively represented. They discussed and discussed the amount of representation each community should get and never reached an agreement acceptable to all. Every speaker at the conference, conscious of his inferiority in popularity to that enjoyed by Congress leaders, endeavoured to demonstrate that the interests of his community were safe in his hands. The Depressed Class 'representatives', Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and others, demanded

separate electorate for the so-called 'untouchables'. Indian electorate had already been divided into two parts—Hindus and Muslims; now it was being asked to be divided into three, nay four or five, with the 'untouchables', Sikhs and Christians all demanding separate electorates. Dr. Ambedkar put a straight question which, in effect, asked Hindus: Would you agree to allow untouchables like Bhangis and Chamars to stand in the common queue at the polling booth? It was a challenge to thousands of years old Hindu tradition, which had condemned a large number of castes as untouchable.

This was one side of the picture. The other savoured of unmitigated mischief. It was the Muslim leaders, who had more than 25 years before pleaded that the Hindu 'untouchables' would be safer in the fold of Islam where they would enjoy equality, and that to reckon them as Hindus for the purposes of legislatures would militate against the proportional representations of Muslims against Hindus who without the untouchables did not far outnumber the Muslims. That all untouchables would embrace Islam was of course a fantastic suggestion. What therefore remained of practical interest was a separate electorate for them so that the preponderance of the Hindu community in the political life might be reduced almost to a parity with the combination of Muslims and others. The ruling authorities were supposed to be at the back of all the mischief because, it was alleged, they regarded upper caste Hindus as inimical to British rule. That the overwhelming majority of those who filled the jails during the movements and who conducted terrorist activities were upper caste Hindus was a fact. So far as Gandhi, Congress leaders, and educated Hindus were concerned, their argument was quite plausible: For decades serious efforts had been going on to remove untouchability like several other evils of Hindu society. How could, they asked, untouchables be condemned as untouchables for ever and made a separate political community? The Congress had always regarded all Indians as one political community and, on the basis of this fundamental principle, had consistently asserted, with all the authority it enjoyed, that there should be a single list of all voters irrespective of their separate religious faiths.

When the delegates 'representing' different religious com-

munities at the Round Table Conference could not produce an agreed solution of the communal tangle—they could not in the nature of things—they admitted their failure, and the British Government declared it would give an award. And the Communal Award came. The depressed classes were assigned 71 special seats in the provincial legislatures—provincial Legislative Assemblies to be precise—to be filled 'by election from special constituencies in which only members of the depressed classes electorally qualified will be entitled to vote.' But since this number was less than the proportion of their population, they were entitled to put up candidates and vote in the general constituencies as well. The special provision, the Award provided, should come to an end after twenty years; it also provided that the provision could be ended earlier by mutual consent.

Gandhi would not allow this mischief to become an accomplished fact. From prison he wrote a letter (August 18, 1932) to the British Prime Minister saying that he would resist the Government's decision with his life: 'The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the depressed classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise, no matter how wide it is.' And he told the Hindu community: 'If the Hindu mass mind is not yet prepared to banish untouchability, root and branch, it must sacrifice me without the slightest hesitation.'

The fast began on September 20, and from the next day anxiety-stricken leaders of the Hindu community started talks searching for a solution. There were prolonged parleys, and eventually the two sections of the community came to an agreed settlement which, as it was made at Poona, was called the Poona Pact. It provided that instead of 71 seats of special constituencies, 148 seats should be reserved for the depressed classes in the general constituencies. Election to these seats would be through joint electorate, subject to a system of primary election under which the depressed class voters in the constituency would

form an electoral college which would elect a panel of four candidates who would stand for the secondary election by the general electorate. The system of primary election would cease after ten years if not abolished earlier by mutual consent. The population of the depressed classes was in fact larger than the proportion of 148 reserved seats, but since they were free to contest general seats, a proportion on the basis of the population was not insisted upon. The Pact, with Gandhi's approval, was submitted to the British Government, who, on September 26, announced their willingness to modify the Communal Award accordingly. At 5.15 p.m. that day Gandhi broke his fast.

The interlude of discussions that preceded and followed the Poona Pact—Hindu orthodoxy was sore at the demand for temples being thrown open to the untouchables—gave some respite to freedom fighters and also to Government. Then came January 4, (1933) on which date the resumed movement completed one year. Instructions were issued by Rajendra Prasad (later President of the Indian Republic), then acting president of the Congress, asking the people generally and Congressmen particularly that the anniversary should be observed by reading out at public meetings a statement he had prepared on the progress of the movement. It was done, and again the consequence was arrests with lathi charges here and there. The happenings of that day were repeated three weeks later on the Independence Day (January 26). Picketing and no-tax campaign had also been going on slowly. The arrested included Rajendra Prasad.

The time for the next annual session of the Congress now came round—a session which had to steer through an orgy of violence let loose by Government. Calcutta was to be the venue of the session, and when preparations were started a question was asked in the Bengal Legislative Council whether to hold a session of the Congress was an offence. The Home Member of the Bengal Government replied that it was a matter of opinion. Different Congress committees had no doubt been declared unlawful, but it was perhaps rightly interpreted by the intelligentsia that it was quite legal to hold a session. Congressmen were not concerned with legal interpretations; they were determined to have the annual meet whether the law permitted it or not. The Government had taken a definite decision to prevent

the session, and among the measures they took to enforce their decision were: (1) The reception committee was declared unlawful; its chairman and secretary were arrested. (2) The police were authorised to arrest any person suspected of having connection with the Congress. (3)The railway authorities were asked not to issue tickets to persons suspected to be delegates to the Congress. (4) People in Calcutta were warned against harbouring Congress delegates or giving a house for meetings of the reception committee. (5) The president designate, Madan Mohan Malaviya, was informed by the district magistrate of Allahabad that he would not be allowed to attend the session. (6) All leading Congressmen of Calcutta, about 500, were taken into custody. (7) Congressmen proceeding to Calcutta from different places were arrested on the way. (8) Malaviya, who left Allahabad despite the magistrate's order, was arrested at Asansol. (9) All the 59 parks of Calcutta were strongly guarded in order to prevent any of them being used for the session.

In spite of the restrictions and precautions, of the 2,500 delegates who had started for Calcutta, only about 1,000 could be arrested on the way; the remaining 1,500 managed to reach the destination where a painful ordeal awaited them. For two days they were belaboured, beaten and tortured. An idea of the brutalities can be had from the following extract from a statement Malaviya issued later:

> On the eventing of March 30, 89 delegates from the U.P., after having been taken into custody in the course of a police raid, were assaulted by European or Anglo-Indian police sergeants in the Lal Bazar Thana. The assault was wanton, brutal and evidently premeditated. Many of the delegates suffered severe contusions on their faces. They were belaboured with sticks and fists. Only a few of the sergeants had sticks; the main body of them used their fists. Blows were freely directed at the stomach, chest, face, eyes and head. Delegates who tottered under a blow which fell on the right side received another immediately on their left. When a prisoner, who had been cuffed in the stomach, placed his hands there a shower of fists fell on his unprotected head and face. Anyone who lowered his head got a

> violent punch on his chin. Those who fell down under the assault were kicked with heavy boots. One delegate from Etawah who tried to protect his head with his hands was seized by several sergeants who dashed his head against a wall and kept him pressed to it by the throat. His head was badly injured and bled profusely. Several delegates were unconscious or semi-unconscious for a long time after the assault was over. Over a dozen delegates bled either from a torn lip, an injured eye, broken teeth or a broken head. The sergeants kept punctuating their brutelike beating with foul abuse. Every one of the delegates had perforce to pass through the double row of sergeants and none of them escaped the assault. Some of these men were permanently disabled.

Similar beating was administered to delegates confined in two other police stations in Calcutta.

Yet, to the chagrin of the authorities, the Congress session was held punctually at 3 p.m. at the Esplanade, one of the busiest quarters of Calcutta, under the presidentship of Mrs. Nellie Sen Gupta, wife of Bengal's front rank leader, J. M. Sen Gupta. Two hundred and fifty delegates were present. She read out her presidential address confidently as if nothing was going to happen. Seven resolutions were also passed before the police appeared. What happend then is described thus by Malaviya:

> Eventually the police made a lathi charge, dispersed the huge crowd which had gathered and arrested the delegates. They bore the assault calmly. Delegate after delegate, as he stood up to move resolutions, was violently attacked by sergeants wielding lathis with all their might. One delegate, a vakil from Arrah who kept persistently reading a resolution in spite of a shower of blows, had his spectacles broken and one of his eyes severely injured. The lathi blows were supplemented by kicking.

The movement, which in one form or another, had been going on since 1929, was showing signs of exhaustion; and Gandhi, by his weapon of self-suffering, again imparted spurt to it. On April 30, 1933 he issued from jail a statement announcing his

decision to go on an 'unconditional and irrevocable fast' for 21 days commencing on May 8, for the 'purification of self and associates and for greater vigilance and watchfulness' in the cause of Harijans, by which term he styled the depressed classes. The fast began at noon on the appointed date, and in the evening Government released him 'in view of the nature of the object of the fast and attitude of mind which it disclosed'. What attitude of mind was found implicit in the statement was not made clear by Government.

Immediately on his release Gandhi said in a press statement that he could not regard his release with any degree of pleasure. 'How can I take advantage of this release to prosecute the Civil Disobedience campaign or to guide it', he argued, and suspended the movement for six weeks. And he appealed to Government that 'if they want real peace in the land, they should take advantage of this suspension and unconditionally discharge all civil resisters.' How could the movement be withdrawn, he contended, as long as 'Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others are buried alive.' Government reaction to the suggestion was made known the very next day. An official communique said that Government was not prepared to negotiate with the Congress because mere suspension of the movement did not fulfil the conditions necessary for the release of political prisoners.

After six weeks had elapsed Gandhi telegraphically asked the Viceroy for an appointment to interview him. A few telegrams were exchanged, and in the closing one the Viceroy's private secretary, turning down Gandhi's request, informed him that 'there can be no question of Government holding conversation with a representative of an association which had not abandoned' resistance to Government. The newspapers kept the people informed of the new development, and as was natural, the waning zeal was galvanised again when Gandhi (after consultation with the acting Congress President, M. S. Aney, and other available leaders) announced resumption of the movement. To suit the situation a new programme was announced by Aney: (1) Individuals should offer civil disobedience on their own responsibility; (2) the movement should be open; secret methods should be abandoned; (3) all Congress organizations including

the office of the All-India Congress Committee should cease to exist for the time being, and in their places dictators should be appointed. Mass civil disobedience including the no-tax or no-rent campaign was discontinued.

The individual civil disobedience movement was to begin with Gandhi setting out on a march to the village of Ras on August 1. Government stopped the contemplated move by arresting Gandhi on the previous night with 34 inmates of his Ashram. He was released after four days, and an order was served on him requiring him to leave the limits of Yeravda village and reside in Poona. The order, as was to be expected, was disobeyed by him, and within half an hour he was again arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

A start having been given, and by one no less than Gandhi, hundreds of men and women came out offering individual satyagraha and were arrested. Then there was a regular stream of civil resisters, who kept the movement going from August 1933 to March 1934.

Within a few days of his arrest and imprisonment Gandhi again went on a 21 day fast. On August 23, his condition was found to be serious. There appeared imminent danger to his life, and he was unconditionally released. But he considered himself a prisoner until the year of the jail term ran out and applied himself exclusively to Harijan work, a non-political activity. In the meantime the imprisoned satyagrahis were being released on the expiry of their terms and re-entering jails on fresh conviction, Jawaharlal Nehru being one of them.

The movement virtually ended on April 7, 1934 with Gandhi saying in a statement: 'After much searching of heart I have arrived at the conclusion that in the present circumstances only one, and that myself and no other, should for the time being, bear the responsibility of civil resistance if it is to succeed as a means of achieving Purna Swaraj.... Henceforth therefore all who have been impelled to civil resistance for swaraj under my advice, directly given or indirectly inferred, will please desist from civil resistance. I am quite convinced that this is the best course in the interest of India's fight for freedom.'

A movement in which imprisonment is an essential condition cannot be sustained for long years. There was obvious prud-

ence in the decision Gandhi took. What was the country to do now? The Swarajists gave their own answer, the old answer. They met in a conference under the presidentship of Dr. Ansari and decided to revive the All-India Swaraj Party. They drew up a programme, the principal item of which was to contest the elections to the legislatures on the issue that they would reject the scheme of constitutional reforms resulting from the Round Table Conference and demand a constituent assembly to be set up to prepare a constitution on the basis of complete independence. The All-India Congress Committee, meeting at Patna on May 18 and 19, ratified the Swaraj Party's decision and appointed a parliamentary board to select candidates and conduct the election campaign. Gandhi again stood aloof as he did in the twenties. He welcomed, in his characteristic accommodating manner, the new move but significantly added: 'My views on the utility of the legislatures in the present state are well known. They remain, on the whole, what they were in 1920.'

Four months later (September 18), Gandhi sprang a surprise by announcing that he would leave the Congress. He had returned from the Patna meeting with a feeling that to 'a very large body of Congress intelligentsia', the Congress, 'instead of remaining the most democratic and representative organization was dominated by my personality,' and in it 'there was no free play of reason'. He also sensed lack of faith in the spinning wheel and khaddar. To many there was nothing common between it and a political movement. To Gandhi it was 'the living link between the Congress and the millions'. He said in the statement explaining the reasons for his resignation: 'The force with which I urged the programme at the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Patna, I know, oppressed many of our best colleagues, but they hesitated to act according to their own convictions. Up to a point suppression of one's views in favour of those of another, considered superior in wisdom or experience, is virtuous and desirable for healthy growth of an organization; it becomes a terrible oppression when one is called upon to repeat the performance from day to day.' He had, it seems, a strong feeling that he was a misfit in the Congress: 'Even on untouchability my method of approach is perhaps

different from that of many, if not of most Congressmen. Last of all, take non-violence. After fourteen years of trial it still remains a policy with the majority of Congress, whereas it is a fundamental creed with me.'

The Congress without Gandhi was unthinkable. There was a melancholy of widowhood everywhere in Congress organization. All mental reservation and feelings of suppression seemed at once to be evaporating into thin air, and when, at the annual session (held at Bombay on October 26-28, 1934 under the presidentship of Rajendra Prasad), he put his leadership to a challenge by proposing amendments to the Congress constitution, he received unflinching support. In the article about the aims of the Congress—attainment of complete independence —the words 'truthful and non-violent means' were substituted for 'legitimate and peaceful' means. The second amendment changed the membership fee of four annas (cash) to 8,000 feet of hand-spun yarn (spun by the member himself) to be made over every month to a Congress depot. The third amendment made habitual wearing of khaddar a necessary qualification for voting and participation in Congress elections. Hand-spinning and weaving had, for thousands of years, been a rural industry substantially supplementary to agriculture, and by making it a vital part of Congress activities Gandhi wanted to make the Congress an organization in which the life of the masses, as it once was and as it should become again, should be reflected. He wanted to be kept always in the forefront the realization that the power-driven spinning and weaving mills of England had deprived the Indian masses of their traditional means of livelihood. Nothing could be a better method of propaganda than this constant reminder of the broad fact that British rule had been the cause of India's economic ruin, from which arose other varieties of degeneration—cultural, educational, social, etc.—according to the Congress.

Nevertheless, Gandhi stuck to his decision and formally resigned. A confirmed ascetic with no attachment to domestic and public life, Gandhi had dedicated his life to service, and the supreme service at that time was to deliver the country from the foreign yoke. Therefore despite the resignation he belonged to the Congress and the Congress belonged to him. His

separation became the detachment of the Gita's philosophy, in which the action, without the worry of attachment, assumes the purity of purified gold. He was not in the Congress, and yet Congressmen firmly believed that Gandhi could do no wrong, and Gandhi alone could lead and guide the Congress. Critics said Gandhi was the dictator of the Congress; he said he was a humble servant. He was the father of satyagraha; he was the father of the non-cooperation movement, and he became father of the nation.

For the time being there was no movement that actually needed Gandhi's leadership. There was repose, well-deserved one might say. But the terrorists were still at work. They were not bound by Congress mandates, not even by those of Gandhi. But terrorism had been declining; it had, so far as its effect on the people and Government was concerned, been overshadowed by the Congress movements. There were 81 cases of terrorist outrages in 1931, 97 in 1932, and 53 in 1933. The decline continued, and by 1935 the terrorist activity disappeared almost entirely. But quite a few thousand people were still (in 1935) in detention; Bengal had the largest number— 2,700. The number of people jailed in the resumed Congress movement (1932-34) was in the neighbourhood of 75,000 excluding those—quite a few thousand—detained without trial.

The Congress, it had been made amply clear, represented the vast majorities of the people, and paradoxically, the Round Table Conference had been formulating plans for the future constitution of India ostensibly with the consent of 'Indian representatives'! But the British made out a case, quite a plausible case, conveying the impression that whether there was a movement or not and whether the Congress participated in the deliberations at the Round Table Conference or not, they were committed, in the Preamble to the Government of India Act of 1919, to grant India self-government. Whether the reforms provided in the next Act—the Government of India Act of 1935—came as a corollary to that commitment or were hastened by the movements is a matter of opinion. The RTC deliberations were hammered into shape by the British Government and produced in the form of a White Paper, which was examined and reported on by a select committee of the two

Houses of the British Parliament. It is in this report that the impression, referred to above, is to be found. After prefacing the account of British achievements in India in the field of politics with the assertion that 'between the collapse of the Mogul Empire and the final establishment of British supremacy, vast tracts were given over to the internecine struggles of the princes, the guerilla warfare of petty chiefs, and the exactions of Indian and European adventures', the Select Committee Report says:

> We have emphasised the magnitude of the British achievement in India because it is this very achievement that has created the problem which we have been commissioned by Parliament to consider. By transforming British India into a single unitary State, it has engendered among Indians a sense of political unity. By giving that State a Government disinterested enough to play the part of an impartial arbiter and powerful enough to control the disruptive forces generated by religious, racial and linguistic divisions, it has fostered the first beginnings, at least, of a sense of nationality transcending these divisions. By establishing conditions in which the performance of the fundamental functions of government, the enforcement of law and order and the maintenance of an upright administration has come to be too easily accepted as a matter of course, it has set Indians free to turn their minds to other things and in particular to the broader political and economic interests of their country. Finally by directing their attention towards the object lessons of British constitutional history and by accustoming the Indian student of Government to express his political ideas in the English language, it has favoured the growth of a body of opinion inspired by two familiar British conceptions: that good government is not an acceptable substitute for self-government, and that the only form of self-government worthy of the name is government through ministers responsible to an elected legislature.

There are claims in this statement which cannot be substantiated; on the contrary they can be refuted. History written by

objective historians is witness to the fact that it was the disruptive forces in India released after the collapse of the Mughal empire which made it possible for the British first to interpose themselves and then establish an empire. In the British connection with India there was inherent no doubt a political system, which, though its real locus was six thousand miles away, inspired educated people of India to demand its application to their country, but there is ample evidence (discussed in the previous pages) to show that the rulers resisted by all possible means, often squalid and manifestly unfair means, the expression of that demand. The economic history of the British period is eloquent proof of the fact that the whole of British India was exploited for the economic gain of the United Kingdom. It was for this purpose that the British wished to hold on to their possession as long as possible, and it was with this end in view that they did their worst to stem the progress of the growing political consciousness. It was to vindicate in different ways the dictum 'that good government is not an acceptable substitute for self-government' that tens of thousands of Indian patriots were clamped into jail, beaten, tortured, lathi-charged and fired upon; patriotism was humiliated and insulted. Yet it will have to be admitted that the British empire was different from the empires that had preceded it. Unlike it they would have never allowed a Tilak or a Gandhi to function. The alternative, it can be suggested with a fair amount of plausibility, would have been violence, terrible violence, appearing again and again and making the British realize, as they did, for example, during the Viceroyalty of Lord Minto, that it was too risky for them to stay. The inclusion of Indians in the legislative councils (in 1862) after the Revolt and gradual growth of democratic institutions was preferable to the risk of ruling without the association of Indians. The British Empire, unlike the Mughal Empire, belonged to the age of a rising democracy, and it could not exist for all times to come in a country whose people had made it known that they were hostile to it.

That was the reason why, when the civil disobedience movement lay exhausted, the British hailed 'self-government' as preferable to 'good government' and drew up a new Act making this maxim its basis.

The Act of 1935 created, according to the dictum applauded by the Select Committee of Parliament, 'ministers responsible to an elected legislature'. Though there were provisions making Governors all-powerful, provincial autonomy was, in effect, established. The system of diarchy disappeared and so did nominated official members of the provincial legislative councils. In visible form, if not in reality, the councils were like Parliament with ministers belonging to the majority party and responsible to the legislature. The federal system of government provided for in the Act could not come into existence, and at the centre the old structure remained.

The Congress rejected the Act; nothing short of complete independence was acceptable to it. But it decided to contest the elections under it if 'only to wreck the constitution'. And it vindicated its claim of being the representative of the Indian people by winning a large majority of the seats. A vote for the Congress was a vote against the British. Out of 836 general seats, the Congress captured 715. The communal elections were held on different slogans; the Muslim League, which was regarded by the British as the representative of the Muslims was routed and independent Muslims of local influence were preferred by Muslim voters.

In all except three Muslim majority provinces of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind, the Congress Party had its majorities and therefore the right to form ministries, but it would not do so until an assurance was given by the Governors that they would not interfere with the day-to-day administration. The A-ICC demanded that the Governors should not use their 'special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities.' There was no assurance; instead, the Governors formed ministries from among small minority parties who did not enjoy a majority in the respective legislative assemblies. And once again the Congress demonstrated to the country and the world at large that without it there was no possibility of the new constitution being worked according to its letter and spirit. Many suggested both in India and outside—and they included constitutional experts—that the constitution had been rendered helpless and virtually ineffective. The assemblies were not called to meet for the obvious

fear that the first thing the majority party—the Congress—would do would be to carry no-confidence motions against the ministries which did not enjoy the confidence of the assemblies. Eventually the Viceroy came out with a 'message to India' (June 27, 1937), in which he said that the Governors would be anxious 'not merely not to provoke conflict with their ministries to whatever party the ministers may belong but to leave nothing undone to avoid or resolve such conflicts.' The Congress Working Committee, while not fully satisfied with the message, saw in it 'a desire to make an approach to the Congress demand' and permitted the Congress parties in the assemblies to assume ministerial responsibility.

The first thing the Congress parties did after forming their governments was to pass the following resolution in their respective legislative assemblies: 'This assembly is of opinion that the Government of India Act, 1935 in no way represents the will of the nation and is wholly unsatisfactory as it has been designed to perpetuate the subjection of the people of India. The Assembly demands that this should be repealed and replaced by a constitution for a free India framed by a constituent assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise, which allows the Indian people full scope of development according to their needs and desires.

20

'*A Post-Dated Cheque*'

INDIA had traversed a long distance on the road to freedom. But India very much included Bengal where men and women had made greater sacrifices than in most other provinces, the Punjab where the Jallianwala Bagh was an unforgettable scene of martyrs laying down their lives and huge crowds exposing themselves to gun-fire, and Sind where there was no lack of response to the call for suffering. These were Muslim majority provinces with Muslim members and other non-Congress elements possessing majorities in the assemblies. Never before was Muslim aloofness from the freedom struggle, in fact from every variety of agitation for political reforms, more manifestly against the grain than now. In Bengal, where a Praja Party headed the ministry with Fazul-ul-Haq as Chief Minister, conditions in some districts, particularly Midnapore and Chittagong, were very distressing. Curfew orders, compulsory use of identity cards by young men—about 25,000 being compelled to carry such cards in Chittagong alone—prohibition of cycling by middle class young men, expulsion from the district of Midnapore of a large number of prominent citizens, banning of the Congress and nationalist organizations, and detention without trial, still continued. According to an answer given by Government in the Central Assembly in August 1937, over 21,000 young people were under one or the other form of restraint in Chittagong. Two hundred and eight institutions were under ban, 2,470 orders were issued by Government up to August 12 imposing various degrees of restraint under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930. It was on the intervention of Gandhi, who met the Chief Minister and the Governor of Bengal, that about 1,500 detenus were released

before the close of 1937 under certain conditions. Some 450 were still left in jails.

In the Punjab, where the ministry belonged to the Unionist Party, a prototype of the Praja Party, there were more prosecutions for sedition than in the period preceding the introduction of the new reforms. Prosecutions, searches, gagging orders were frequent.

The spirit of defiance to the British and the will and determination to throw away the foreign yoke, which had been in abundance in the Punjab and Bengal, were completely absent in the ministers who seemed to be under the hold of English Governors. They were a sad contrast to their counterparts in the provinces of Congress majorities, where political prisoners had been released and the Governors had to agree to release even some of those involved in violent activities when the ministries threatened to resign. And restrictions on the movements of political workers were removed, securities taken from newspapers were refunded, black lists of newspapers and political suspects were cancelled, political films were permitted to be exhibited, bans imposed on political organizations and books were lifted. The Congress made its influence and authority felt even by the Central Government, which was still wholly and solely dominated by the Viceroy. On July 31, 1937 the Government of India broke the news that 225 politicals confined in the cellular jail of the Andamans, then a penal island, had been on hunger strike since July 24. They were passing their days in great agony and under very hard conditions and took the extreme step of self-immolation in sheer desperation. They had resorted to the same step on several occasions in the past and in consequence three of them lost their lives. This time it was a fast to the finish. On August 9, Andamans Day was observed in the country to voice the nation's indignation. Gandhi's intervention however settled the matter, and by the beginning of 1938 the prisoners were repatriated to India and transferred to the jails of the provinces to which they belonged.

The Muslim problem was quite baffling. The Muslims were not with the Congress, they were not with the Muslim League either. The leadership that represented them at the Round Table Conference was rejected by them in the first election

under the 1935 Act. It seemed that the League had spent the thirty years of its life in vain; the election result was a challenge to it, and it was galvanised by this challenge into action. The action started with the condemnation of Congress rule as Hindu rule, inimical to the Muslims. The issues raised were not convincing even to British rulers, but they served as a good propaganda stunt to bring all Muslims under one banner, that of the League. The climax of this propaganda was the demand, formulated in a resolution at the 1940 annual session of the League (held at Lahore), for separate Muslim homeland, that is, the formation of Muslim majority provinces including the North-West Frontier Province, which had an overwhelming Congress majority of Muslim members in the assembly, into a separate country.

While young men of the League were carrying on a tearing propaganda to rally Muslims behind this demand, German aggression had begun in Europe and there was war. On September, 1939 the British Government made a declaration of war, and within a few hours the Indian Viceroy, without consultation with the people's representatives in the legislative assemblies, declared India as a belligerent country on the side of the Allies. In London an amendment to the Government of India Act, 1935 was rushed through Parliamen in eleven minutes empowering the Viceroy to override any provisions of the Act. The same day the Defence of India Ordinance was issued by the Government of India, which provided for curtailment of civil liberties.

The situation was discussed for over 30 hours by the Congress Working Committee in a five-day session which began on September 8. The conclusion was communicated in a statement which said: 'The Governments of Great Britain and France had declared that they were fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. During the war of 1914-18 also the declared war aims were the preservation of democracy, self-determination and freedom of small nations; yet the very Government which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret pacts embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman Empire. If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges, then Indians can have nothing to do with it. If

however the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it.'

The Working Committee therefore invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims were and how these aims were to be given effect to in India and to be given effect to 'in the present'. The Committee emphasised that it was far more important to give immediate effect to these aims to the largest possible extent, for only this would convince the people that the declaration was meant to be honoured.

Then followed the Viceroy's interviews with the representatives of different parties—as many as 52 including Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Jinnah—at the end of which he announced that the British Government would frame such modifications of the Government of India Act 'as may be desirable'. For the present, he said, he would establish a Consultative Group, representative of all major political parties in India and of the Indian Princes, to be associated with the conduct of the war. There was no trace in this announcement of any concession to the Congress demand, and the Working Committee called upon the Congress Ministers to resign and come out of Government, telling the people that it 'cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end.' By December 1939 all Congress ministries were out of office.

In the midst of uncertainty about the future, the Congress met for its annual session in March 1940 at Ramgarh under the presidentship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The atmosphere was charged with the unanimous feeling summed up in these words: 'no help to the British in the war'. A resolution formalised it. The session decided on 'civil disobedience to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress organization is considered fit for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis.' Gandhi was appointed leader of the movement. He made a beginning then and there. He told the delegates in his speech at the session that 'every Congress committee should become a satyagraha committee and register such Congressmen as believe in the cultivation of the spirit of goodwill towards all, who have

no untouchability in them in any shape or form, who would spin regularly and who habitually use khaddar to the exclusion of all other cloth.'

In July the Working Committee made a gesture for rapprochement, and on the motion of the Madras leader, C. Rajagopalachari, adopted a resolution offering to co-operate with the British if (1) the right of India to complete independence was acknowledged and (2) a provisional national government enjoying the confidence of the elected members of the central legislature was immediately formed. Gandhi and several members of the Committee including Nehru were opposed to the resolution, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan even resigned from the committee. Reacting to this offer the Viceroy made a statement on August 8, in which he offered to invite some Indians to join his Executive Council and to establish a War Advisory Council. He also announced that after the war Indians themselves would be entrusted with the task of framing a constitution for their country.

A month later (September 15), the situation was reconsidered by the A-ICC which authorized Gandhi to start a movement in whatever manner he desired. It was to be a symbolic affair of which he gave a hint in a speech: 'If we can get a declaration from the British Government that the Congress can carry on anti-war propaganda and preach non-cooperation with the Government in their war effort, we will not have civil disobedience.' He said he would seek an interview with the Viceroy and tell him that 'this is the position to which we have been reduced; we do not want to embarrass you and deflect you from your purpose in regard to war effort. We go our way, and you go yours undeterred, the common ground being non-violence. If we carry the people with us, there will be no war effort on the part of our people. If, on the other hand, without your using any but moral pressure, you find that the people help the war effort, we can have no cause for grumbling. If you get assistance from the Princes, from the zamindars, from anybody high or low, you can have it; but let our voice also be heard.' He then indicated the shape of satyagraha he had in mind: 'There will be no mass civil disobedience because mass civil disobedience is not required for this occasion. Free-

dom of speech and pen is the foundation of Swaraj. If the foundation stone is in danger, you have to exert the whole of your might in order to defend that single stone.' Gandhi met the Viceroy on September 27 and again on the 30th, but there was no settlement.

Arrests, detention, restraint orders, preceded the inauguration of the movement as they did in the past. Over 2,000 Congressmen (including top leaders of the Socialist wing of the Congress, Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia) were arrested. A large number of people were directed (1) to report themselves at the police stations at regular intervals, (2) not to take part in any subversive movement or indulge in any anti-war propaganda, (3) not to converse, communicate or associate with school or college students, (4) not to attend meetings of any kind, and (5) to notify in person departure from one place to another to the police at least 24 hours before the time of the departure.

Eventually on October 17, 1940 Gandhi started his movement. From its contents flowed the inference that the war effort was not to be obstructed actively, but an atmosphere of anti-war effort psychology was to be created. In the instructions he issued to the provincial Congress committees, Gandhi said: 'No one will offer civil disobedience without first informing the district magistrate of his district of the time when and the place and the manner in which it is to be offered. It is advisable not to hold meetings for the purpose in cities. Meetings may be held in villages. The best and the easiest way is to repeat the following slogan to passersby as the resister walks on in a particular direction until he is arrested: "It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance." Civil disobedience is to be offered *singly*; it need not be simultaneous. All demonstrations should be avoided when civil disobedience is offered.'

The first *single* satyagrahi chosen by Gandhi was Vinoba Bhave. He was not known to the public till then; he had been a quiet worker in Gandhi's Ashram. Introducing him to the people, Gandhi said: 'Vinoba is next to me the best exponent and embodiment of non-violence. He has buried himself in a

particular locality in the constructive programme. He has greater power of concentration than myself. His antipathy of war is born of pure non-violence.' For four days Vinoba carried on his anti-war propaganda. He was arrested on the fifth day and sentenced to three months imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru was to be Satyagrahi No. 2 and to offer satyagraha on November 6, but he was arrested on October 31 for the speeches he had delivered in the district of Gorakhpur and was sentenced to a term of four years. Next came the turn, one by one, of members of different Congress committees and Congress members of the legislatures including Ministers, who were all in jail by the end of November.

So meticulous was Gandhi about avoiding disturbances that when he heard of two demonstrations, one at Patna and the other at Lahore, and of police lathi-charge on them, he instructed the provincial committees that notice of satyagraha should be given only to the authorities and that public notification was not necessary. Nevertheless, there was tension in the country because the news of arrests, jail sentences, heavy fines, auctioning of property to realize fines, was appearing in newspapers from day to day.

While individual satyagraha was going on, the leading Moderates, Liberals, Hindu-Sabhaites, etc. met in a conference at Bombay (March 1941) to find a way out of the prolonged impasse. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who presided, said that 'there has never been a government of India more isolated from public opinion and from the main current of thought in the country than the present Government.' And in July the Viceroy expanded his Executive Council, adding to it seven Indians, all Moderates. The Muslim League stayed away. It had by now acquired a 'representative' character, which had not been vindicated by the elections. It had urged on Muslim members of the legislatures the necessity of all Muslims coming under one banner, and asked them to join it. Most members responded to the call of expediency. The League therefore proudly asserted that it and it alone represented the Muslims of India. The Congress already enjoyed the representative status, and thus the two parties representing the people of India in the legislatures stayed away making the expansion of the Execu-

tive Council look farcical. Why did the League choose to stay away? It had not joined forces in the satyagraha movement; in fact it had pretended very emphatically that the satyagraha of the 'Hindu Congress' was directed against the Muslims! It demanded that any future constitutional arrangement should be based on the recognition of the League's demand for a separate homeland, which came to be called Pakistan. Until the British Government accepted this demand in principle the League would not extend its co-operation to Government. The League, by this stand, completely outwitted the age-old British design of invoking Muslims as one of the obstacles. Now the League itself wanted freedom, even though under a separate Muslim nationality. The League kept aloof only in principle, without doing any active harm to the war effort.

The Congress movement too had little adverse effect on the progress of the war effort. In a few months even the symbolic utterance of the slogan came to an end, and in October 1941 Government began releasing Satyagraha prisoners. Early in December it formally announced its decision to release 'those civil disobedience prisoners whose offences have been formal or symbolic in character.' On the side of the Congress the movement formally continued, but Gandhi did not permit the released men to re-offer satyagraha for the time being. Communist prisoners, mostly detenus, were considered 'dangerous' and not released until the German invasion of Russia, which resulted in the Soviet Union joining the Allies.

The movement ended however on a rather technical anti-climax. Gandhi had interpreted the resolution, authorising him to lead the movement, to mean that the Congress was opposed to participation in the war, all wars, principally on the ground of non-violence. The Working Committee, meeting on December 23, 1941, held, on its attention being drawn by Rajagopalachari, that this interpretation was not borne out by the terms of the resolution. Gandhi thereupon asked to be relieved of the responsibility, and the Committee 'regretfully' acceded to his wish. He then told the A-ICC which met subsequently: 'I do not want to send workers to jail nowadays when their services can be better availed of in allaying panic.' He asked them to return to the constructive work of his programme.

Thus the anti-war movement came to an end.

Later opened, with the entry of Japan in the war, a new chapter of negotiations. In March 1942 the British Government commissioned Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the War Cabinet, to go to India and attempt to resolve the deadlock. He brought with him the following proposals, which he released on landing in India:

'(A) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India in a manner prescribed hereafter an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

'(B) Provision shall be made. as set out below, for participation of Indian states in the constitution-making body.

'(C) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to (i) the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

'With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

'(ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with undertakings given by His Majesty's Government for the protection of racial and religious minorities but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member states of the British Commonwealth.

'Whether or not an Indian state elects to adhere to the constitution it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new constitution.

'(D) The constitution making body shall be composed as follows unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal

communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities.

'Immediately upon the result being known of provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower House of Provincial Legislatures shall as a single electoral college proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about 1/10 of the number of the electoral college.

'Indian states shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion as to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members.

'(E) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the Defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organizing to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.'

The Preamble to these proposals stated: 'The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs.'

The proposal, which gave provinces freedom of non-accession to the Indian Union, was considered by the Congress Working Committee as a severe blow to Indian unity. But to the Committee the present was more important than the future. 'In today's grave crisis,' it said, 'it is the present that counts, and even proposals for the future are important in so far as

they affect the present.'

The prevailing situation was discussed at length by the Congress President (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad) and other Congress leaders with Sir Stafford. The Congress condition for acceptance of the Cripps proposals was that the Government, to be reconstituted under part E of the proposals, should enjoy full powers analogous to the Cabinet in Great Britain. If that was done, the Congress would not bother much about the proposals for the future, implying thereby that they too would be accepted. The Congress President said: 'The future, important as it is, will depend on what happens in the next few months and years. We are therefore prepared to do without any assurance for this uncertain future, hoping that through our sacrifices in the defence of our country we would lay the solid and enduring foundations for a free and independent India.' What, in short, the Congress demanded was a truly national government at the centre with full powers, with the Viceroy functioning as constitutional head.

Cripps said that his proposals did offer what the Congress demanded and himself used the words 'Cabinet' and 'National Government' in his conversation with the Congress President. He also added, as the Congress President later gave out to the Press, that the Viceroy would act as the King of England did *vis-a-vis* the Cabinet. The only difference between him and the Congress leaders was over the portfolio of Defence which, he said, must continue to remain with the Commander-in-Chief. The Congress asserted that it wanted power to meet the Japanese aggression, which might appear any moment in India, and that therefore the portfolio of Defence was of great importance. To this Cripps did not agree. He offered a new proposal:

'(a) The Commander-in-Chief should retain a seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council as War Member and should retain his full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War Cabinet upon which body a representative Indian should sit with equal powers in all matters relating to the defence of India. Membership of the Pacific Council would likewise be offered to a representative Indian.

'(b) An Indian representative member would be added to the Viceroy's Executive Council, who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which can organisationally be separated immediately from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department. In addition, this member would take over the Defence Co-ordination Department which is at present directly under the Viceroy, and certain other functions of the Government of India which are directly related to the defence and which do not fall under any of the other existing departments.'

The Congress agreed to this position. But later, with regard to the proposal of National Government, Cripps, on advice from higher quarters. it was said, went back upon his interpretation of part E and contended that in the new government to be formed the Viceroy would retain all his existing powers. Cripps claimed that he had never meant what Congress leaders had understood him to mean. The reason given by Cripps against a national government with Cabinet responsibility was that such a government would constitute 'an absolute dictatorship of the majority' and 'it would not be consistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty's Government to protect the rights of the minorities.'

Gandhi had foreseen the result of the Cripps Mission, and although he went to Delhi and met Cripps, he had declared that the offer was 'a post-dated cheque; take it or leave it'. He would not take it. And Cripps announced at a Press conference that the British Government's draft proposals were withdrawn.

The failure of the Cripps Mission cast a gloom on the horizon. Indians were not only becoming ever more hostile to British rule but losing faith in its capacity to defend India from the threatened Japanese invasion. One by one British possessions in the Far East were falling to the Japanese. The incredibly easy conquest of Burma, Malaya and the 'impregnable' fortress of Singapore by the Japanese arms reduced British prestige considerably. What shocked and humiliated India most was the British rulers' racial discrimination in the treatment accorded to British and Indian evacuees from Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma. To quote from *Indian National Congress—Report of the General Secretaries*, 'the Indian refugees had to face starvation anl death. Children, old men

and women fell by the roadside, uncared for and even uncremated. Healthy young men and women were wrecks when they succeeded in reaching the frontiers of India. The British evacuees, on the other hand, were pampered and their lives made as soft and cosy as the British administration in India could make them. The distinction in treatment was carried to the absurd length of setting apart roads, one for the whites and the other for the coloured to travel by. The one for the whites was a well-metalled road along which after every few miles were arrangements for feeding, resting, etc. In vivid contrast to this, the inhuman and insulting treatment of tens of thousands of Indians rankled deeply in the Indian mind. The cup of India's degradation seemed to be overflowing.'

Against this background the All-India Congress Committee met at Allahabad towards the end of April. Gandhi did not attend the meeting but sent a note embodying his views. He made the following points: (1) The Cripps proposals showed up the imperialism in its nakedness. (2) Britain was incapable of defending India. (3) There was perpetual conflict between Indian and British interests. (4) Japan's quarrel was not with India but with the British Empire. (5) India's participation in war was a purely British act. (6) The British should withdraw to enable India to defend herself; England's plea that she was in India to protect the princes and the minorities was untenable; both were her creation. (7) India bore no enmity towards Japan or any other nation. If Japan nevertheless attacked India, she would meet with complete non-violent non-cooperation. Japan was a potential danger to India because India was an imperial possession of Great Britain and aroused Japan's cupidity. Gandhi said in conclusion that Britain should make a peaceful and friendly withdrawal from India.

The resolution finally passed by the A-ICC was, on the whole, on the line indicated by Gandhi. Stage was now set for another movement, not symbolic but a mighty one.

21

The Rebellious Movement—1942-45

WAR inevitably disturbs the even tenor of life; that of 1939-45 was more exacting than the previous one had been. And India, despite the opposition of her vocal people, was a major contributor to the British war effort. The advance of the Japanese forces compelled Government to take some precautionary measures, which added to the misery of the people. One of them was the scorched earth policy, otherwise known as the denial policy. Thousands were driven out of their homes on the sea coast, particularly in Bengal and Orissa, and deprived of shelter and livelihood. Another was forcible collection of war contribution. On the top of it all was the black-marketeer who was making himself richer by the rising demand and falling supply. He was circumventing Government's control measures. Government was itself printing more and more currency notes to buy consumer goods for the war. India was made to finance and fight a war which had been thrust on her. She was a veritable corpse, said Gandhi, a heavy weight on the shoulders of the Allies. Why should India suffer for the sake of an unwanted empire, he asked, and called upon the people to tell the British, with all the strength at their command, to 'Quit India.' This was to be the nucleus of his next movement which he claimed would be the biggest movement of his life. There was no hope of settlement left, and he asked Britain to 'leave India to God and if that be too much, leave her to anarchy'. But he advised the people not to 'lean on the Japanese to get rid of British power'.

The All-India Congress Committee, which met on August 8 at Bombay for its last historic session, put its seal of approval to the 'Quit India' resolution. It said: 'The committee feels

that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves therefore to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines and on the widest possible scale so that the country might utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji, and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.' In the event of arrest of leaders, the Committee authorized 'every Indian to be his own guide'.

The resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Vallabhbhai Patel. Only thirteen members opposed it; twelve of them were communists—the communists had changed their attitude towards the war and called it the 'people's war' after Germany's invasion of Russia.

After the passage of the resolution Gandhi made an inspiring speech, the longest ever delivered by him. He spoke for 140 minutes, first in Hindustani and then in English. He said: 'I want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had. Freedom cannot now wait for the realization of communal unity. If that unity is not achieved, sacrifices necessary for it will have to be much greater than would have otherwise sufficed. But the Congress must win freedom or be wiped out in the effort; and forget not that the freedom which the Congress is struggling to achieve will not be for the Congressmen alone but for all the forty crores of the Indian people. Congressmen must for ever remain humble servants of the people.... Every one of you should consider from this moment onwards a free man or woman and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this imperialism. It is not a make-believe that I am suggesting to you. It is the very essence of freedom. The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he considers himself to be a free being.'

He added: 'Here is a *mantra*, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours

give expression to it. The *mantra* is: We shall "Do or Die". We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge. Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keeps me free, I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails. I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time when it is in trouble. Nothing however should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle secrecy is a sin. A free man should not engage in a secret movement. Freedom has to come not tomorrow but today. I have therefore pledged the Congress and the Congress has pledged herself that she will do or die.'

Gandhi said the mass struggle would not start at once. He would wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him, and the process would take two or three weeks. But that was not to be. In the early hours of August 9 he and all members of the Working Committee were arrested and taken to a place kept secret. Most Congressmen, who had taken part in the previous movements, were taken into custody and put under detention. All Congress organizations were declared illegal.

The movement which then began was wholly different from the earlier ones. The pent-up feelings and anger of the people burst out. A few days before the August 9 round-up, whispers were passing from mouth to mouth that there would be trouble, railway trains would stop, and so on. And this really came to pass. After the newspapers broke the news of the arrest of leaders thousands of people, largely from rural areas, came out and attacked any visible symbol of British authority. In the village the most conspicuous symbol was the railway track which was then being used to carry troops to different theatres of the war. Hundreds of miles of the track were uprooted in one night. The efficient British system of intelligence was for once caught napping.

For a few days the excitement of the people manifested itself in mass demonstrations which were attempted to be put down by the authorities by lathi charge, firing, and beating. Then

the open rebellion started. The rebels were their own leaders and they made their own decisions as to where to strike at the authority. Big uncontrollable crowds moved about burning Government buildings, pulling down telegraph and telephone wires, destroying movable Government property. Police stations, which were the bases of British authority, and railway stations which controlled the communication system, were made the main target. Students came out of their colleges and universities and took to rebellious activities. The movement was in the hands of those who had never been in the Congress. The new arrivals had no scruples about violence or non-violence. They collected fire arms, seizing them even from the police. At many places the crowds constituted a terror to the police which had for many years terrorised the people. They would surround the police station and ask the officer to surrender the station to them, and he would quietly do so. They did not belong to Gandhi's creed, and yet their slogans were 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' (victory to Gandhi), 'We shall do or die in the attempt of driving out the British', 'O, Great Leader, we shall do or die in obedience to you', 'the British must Quit India,' 'the blood-suckers must go.'

In Ballia district of U. P. the mobs succeeded in capturing the entire district administration and establishing on August 19 their 'Swaraj Government'; it lasted only a few days. Government officers, who had again and again arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned satyagrahis in the past, were for some time prisoners of the rebels.

According to a statement of the Government of India's Home member (made in the Central Assembly on September 15), in a period of one month about 250 railway stations were destroyed or damaged, of which 180 were in Ballia and other districts of East U. P.; there were 24 cases of derailment; extensive damage was done to the rolling stock and railway engines; about 550 post offices were attacked of which over 50 were completely burnt down and about 200 seriously damaged; postage stamps worth about a lakh of rupees were destroyed; a large number of letter boxes with their contents were burnt; and telegraph or telephone wires were cut at 3,500 places. In many district roads were dug out and made impassable.

bridges were blown off. A single crowd sometimes consisted of about 100,000 people.

The immediate task before the Government in the U.P. was how to reoccupy Ballia district. Troops were commissioned, and they proceeded to 'teach the people a lesson'. According to an account prepared by and published in Govind Sahai's *1942 Rebellion*, 'about 150 houses of Congressmen were looted and burnt and ladies and children were driven out of the villages. Hair of some ladies was cut, and others were deprived of their ornaments and clothes and forced to wear rags. Many families were locked inside their houses for 24 hours without food or water. Some people were tied to trees and caned mercilessly. Many were forced to lick spittle from the ground and were contemptuously addressed with filthy abuses. It was reported that at some of the police stations even urine was poured into the mouths of the victims. Beating with lathis, dandas, butts of rifles, fists and shoes was almost a common practice. Slapping, even piercing with bayonets was not uncommon. Collective fines of about Rs. 12 lakhs were imposed, but it was reported that actually more than 29 lakhs were realized. More than 46 persons died as a result of bullet wounds and many more were injured. A few hundred houses were burnt and more than 100 were demolished.'

In Bihar one feature of the open rebellion was attack on the jails. Jails were taken possession of by mobs, and prisoners were set free. In one place, Madhubani, prisoners themselves rose in revolt; they caught hold of the jail superintendent and put him behind the bars. Then all prisoners, except the politicals, fled away. In Hazipur, where 2,000 people attacked the jail, all prisoners, about a thousand including politicals, were released, with the jail authorities looking helplessly at the spectacle. Some of them were later caught by the police and brutally punished; some were seated on donkey backs and moved from place to place. At Sitamarhi a mob of 10,000 attacked the jail. Other jails raided were those of Arrah and Gonda in the Santhal Parganas.

In Gujarat 100 textile mills were closed for over thee months; the striking workers would not return to work despite all temptations and threats held out to them. It was a unique event.

The Gujarat strike spread to other provinces, and factories and mills remained closed for varying periods in Madras, Baroda, Indore, Nagpur and Delhi.

Students took a conspicuous part in the movement. Large numbers of them came out or were rusticated from their schools or colleges. In Benares division alone 32,000 students were expelled from their institutions.

Gandhi had said in his speech at the A-ICC, 'I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails'; this was interpreted by men in the movement as an advice to avoid courting imprisonment. Many of them went underground and applied themselves to organizing rebellious activities. After the mass fury had spent itself, the movement began to peter out in sporadic disorders. From day to day the newspapers reported of the burning of one railway station or the looting of another, of the murder of a police official, of attempts to derail railway trains, of telegraph wires and poles being pulled down, and of so many other activities. For two years handbills and pamphlets continued to be printed secretly and distributed to people exhorting them to rebel. There was no lack of money; it was available for the mere asking. Such of the news as the newspapers would not carry for fear of prosecution under the Defence of India Rules was published in the rebels' own (unauthorized) weeklies, which were circulated in tens of thousands. Police searches were a daily affair; arms and literatures were captured and the possessors were sentenced to long terms.

Then came Government reprisals. On September 24 K. C. Neogy gave in the Central Assembly instances of general pillage and wanton damage to private property done by police and military, of shooting at random, and of assaults. He also read out a notice served on the U.P. Government by a zamindar of Ghazipur. The notice stated:

> On August 26, 1942 my manager sent a message that four European soldiers accompanied by about 150 military men armed with lathis and along with the sub-inspector of Madaganj police station came to my village in the afternoon of August 24 and asked all the male members including my manager and servants to leave the village and file

on a "kutcha" road, which passed through the village, on pain of being shot at. The male members including children came out of the village and sat on the kutcha road. Thereafter the four European soldiers along with the military men entered the village leaving a few military men to guard the villagers still on the road.

In the village the women were asked to come out of their houses on threat of being shot at should they refuse to do so. When the women came out, the soldiers deprived them of their ornaments...and after that they raided the houses and looted cash, jewellery, ornaments, clocks, etc. Then the soldiers removed the clothings from the houses of the villagers and set them on fire and further set fire to 20 houses of my tenants in addition to several thatched houses in the village. After having looted my house and the house of my tenants the soldiers came back on the road and asked all children below the age of 12 to go out of the line of the people sitting on the road. After this order was complied with, the adult persons sitting on the road were asked to sit like frogs after undressing themselves, including my manager. They had to obey the order at the point of the rifle. There after a bamboo stick was split up into a few parts and five stripes were severely inflicted on the naked back of each of the villagers. One of my peons who was protesting was tied to a tree and mercilessly beaten with 30 stripes and was later on taken under arrest with three other villagers.

Here is another case narrated by Neogy:

Some students were going about villages preaching satyagraha. After finishing their preaching they were going to catch a train at some railway station in Kaira district. The police party, which was hunting these boys, alighted from the train which they were going to catch and marched towards them. In spite of their willingness to be arrested peacefully, the police fired on these students. Three of them were killed and a large number of them wounded. Not only that, after firing on these boys the police prevented help being given to the wounded. The

wounded felt thirsty. The villagers and the railway staff were prevented from giving them water.

In Nandurbar East in the Bombay Presidency, a police sub-inspector was chasing some boys and girls who had taken part in a procession. He was interrupted by a young boy holding a national flag in his hand. The boy asked the sub-inspector to shoot him in the chest. The enraged sub-inspector did it, but the bullet went off the mark. The boy again threw a challenge, and this time the sub-inspector had the boy held erect by his soldiers and then shot him dead. More shooting then followed. killing five boys.

In Patna eleven students were shot while attempting to hoist the national flag on the Government Secretariat building. Six died on the spot and one in hospital.

According to Govind Sahai, 'a child aged 18 months, whose father was absconding, was jailed and for four days kept away from his mother so that she should give out the whereabouts of her husband. But the poor woman did not know it herself. In Purania district (Bihar) eight persons were killed by firing on August 13. One of them was a boy, named Dhruva. After consigning the remains of the boy to the flames, his father, Dr. Kundoo, was going back home. The doctor was arrested on the way and kept in detention.

In several parts of the country, particularly in some districts of Bengal and the Central Provinces, women (about 200) were raped by soldiers. In some cases, they were dragged out of their houses and raped on public thoroughfares. In Ashti and Chimur villages of the Chanda district in the Central Provinces, the tragedy was more harrowing than in other places. The villages, being not very far from Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram, attracted special attention of the inmates, and one of them, Prof. Bhansali, demanded an inquiry and went on an indefinite fast, refusing even water. The fast lasted 63 days, but there was no inquiry.

In an article in the *Samaj*, Baljit Singh summed up police methods of torture thus: 'Firing people in scorching heat, stripping them naked, hanging them upside down and then whipping them, making women naked and then beating them,

putting chilli powder in their genitals, putting people in smoky rooms where red chillies were burning, making the naked people crawl on their stomach, and similar inhuman methods were employed by the police to terrorise people. In the presence of fathers, their daughters were molested. At public places women were undressed and then dragged and subjected to other types of indignities. A new method was innovated. A man was made to sit with his legs stretched forward and two men held his hands and another held his head in between, as a result of which blood would gush out of his genitals resulting in his immediate death or rendering him useless for ever.'

In a pamphlet, *The Lahore Fort Torture Camp*, the Punjab's renowned Congress leader, Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, published an account of police torture practised on political prisoners in the Lahore Fort. The pamphlet contains statements of victimised prisoners, from which a few quotations are given below. These are illustrations of similar torture in other jails.

Dwijendranath Bose, a nephew of Subhas Chandra Bose: 'Mr. Wace, the D.I.G. of C.I.D., Punjab, one day during the last week of May while interrogating me, threatened me that I would be shot dead if I did not disclose everything.... Then I was taken to my cell and again brought back for interrogation when Sardar Bahadur Sampuran Singh told me that the D.I.G. had ordered him to beat me further and to burn steamcoal in my cell. He started beating me again more zealously with fists and shoes and kept me awake till late hours that night and burnt steamcoal in my cell with the result that I fainted after half an hour. The Deputy Superintendent then threatened that he would make me naked and ask the torture staff to put a bamboo stick into my anus or to practise such torture as was meted out to Sardar Niranjan Singh Talib.'

Sardar Niranjan Singh Talib, a colleague of Subhas Bose: 'One sub-inspector threw me on the ground with my face downward. After stripping me of clothes he beat me with shoes very badly. He then sat on my thighs and beat my chest so hard that I became unconscious. Henceforth I was tortured in the above manner every day. I was kept awake day and night. I was not allowed to sit except when in privy for call

of nature. If I began to doze, I was pulled by the beard. I thought of putting an end to my life, and one day I threw myself down from the top office stairs, but I escaped death.'

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Socialist leader (in a letter to Prof. Harold J. Laski): 'I would here indicate that I was ill-treated in one way or another for over four months, that I was kept awake day after day, night after night, the longest single stretch running into ten days, and that when I resisted the police in their efforts to make me stand, they wheeled me round on my manacled hands on the matted floor.'

Socialist leader Jayaprakash Narain: 'The final stage in my harassments, which turned them into a form of torture, was to allow me no sleep during day or night. From morning till 12 midnight I would be continuously kept in the office, then taken to the cell for an hour, brought to the office again for an hour or two, taken back for an hour again and so on till the morning.'

Ramanandan Misra: 'During interrogation I was subjected to violence in the shape of kicks, slaps, fist blows on my face and severe pulling of my hair. I was beaten 20 times. During the beating on March 11, 1943, I lost consciousness and do not know if the beating was continued thereafter.'

In Bombay, according to the same pamphlet, 'there were brutal beatings by the police and two persons were reported to have died after vomitting blood. Another committed suicide when let off on the third day after ghastly beating. Running pins in finger tips, severe beating for days together, swinging men by the legs and dashing them down, making them lie on ice, and such other cruelties were also reported.' A school master was dragged down from the bus and beaten blue for shouting Congress slogans. At Bedkihal 'four teeth of a boy were knocked out because he would not furnish information about an absconder'.

According to a Congress estimate, 'not less than 15,000' were killed by police firings, bombing and other atrocities; and those wounded were countless'. The Government of India gave the following figures: killed—940; wounded—1,630; firing—538 times; arrests—60,229; military called out—60 times; air-bombing at Patna, Bhagalpore, Nadia, Monghyr, Talchera and Tamluk—6 times; railway stations burnt—318; telegraph and

telephone wires cut—945; derailments—59; damage to rolling stock—estimated at Rs. 18,00,000; damage to track—Rs. 9,00,000; damage to station buildings—Rs. 8,50,000; damage to ancillary equipment—Rs. 6,50,000; loss of cash and other valuables—Rs. 2,00,000.

Losses suffered by the people through police and military action were never estimated by anybody.

The authorities did not anticipate that after Gandhi's arrest the disturbances would take the form of a rebellion. After what is known as spontaneous outburst was over, the intelligence department was largely strengthened; the network was cast so wide that every Government department, every business establishment and every market place had some kind of informers. Informers cleverly got admission into underground groups and rendered valuable service to Government. It was often on their information that raids were made, explosives, weapons, etc. seized and the men found at the place were arrested. Many a big plan of the rebels was thus frustrated.

Often police would not arrest the absconders even after getting their whereabouts from the informers. This policy was advisedly adopted. It gave the police an opportunity to rope in those who harboured the absconders. After a while the absconders were arrested and thrown into the police lock-up—a tiny unventilated cell—for about two months for questioning. The lock-up was a torture cabin where the men were beaten and starved to extract from them information about their co-workers and their own activities. A lock-up was hardly fit for human habitation. It was meant to be a 24-hour sojourn for an under-trial prisoner who urinated on the floor; it was never washed or cleaned. The questioning in the lock-up often led to the arrest of relatives and parents of the detenu as also of other absconders.

But the workers of the second phase of the movement, partly owing to their secret methods and partly to police vigilance, never succeeded in gaining the former tempo—the spontaneous outburst. One aspect of the second phase was purely non-violent; the usual demonstrations were made and processions were taken out; they were, as happened in the past, dispersed by lathicharge or firing. People had shaken off fear of police-

men whom the daring among the procession openly abused. But the Congess, it seemed, had been completely suppressed. All Congress offices and premises were under the occupation of Government; records were seized and removed; and the tricolour flag was nowhere to be seen, not even on Independence Day. Khaddar bhandars, the manifestation of Gandhi's economic philosophy, had under his instruction been either voluntarily closed or seized already by the police. Ninety-six nationalist newspapers, again under his instructions, stopped publication preferring closure to the suffocating censorship. But after a few months most of them re-appeared.

According to Congress estimate, 'not less than a hundred thousand persons must have been put in prison. Some of them were released after a short detention, but the rest were detained indefinitely. Arrests became a regular money-making business for police. Innocent persons were hauled up and then intimidated into paying large sums of money for release.'

The way the sudden eruption assumed a violent form was against the Gandhian creed of non-violence, and on August 14, five days after his arrest, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy dissociating himself from the violent activities that were rampant. He said: 'Violence was never contemplated at any stage. A definition of what could be included in non-violent action has been interpreted in a sinister and subtle manner as if the Congress were preparing for violent action.' Again, in his letter to the Home Secretary of the Government of India, he said on September 23: 'In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, I claim that Congress policy still remains unequivocally non-violent. The wholesale arrest of the Congress leaders seems to have made the people wild with rage to the point of losing self-control. I feel that the Government, not the Congress, are responsible for the destruction that has taken place.'

On the last day of December Gandhi wrote another letter to the Viceroy, in which he notified his intention of fasting for 21 days from February 10, 1943. He contended that Government had by its series of repressive measures beginning with the unwarranted arrest of Congress leaders, deeply wronged the people of India. The law of satyagraha, he said, prescribed a remedy in such moments of trial and that was to 'crucify the

flesh by fasting'. He added that if Government could convince him of his error, he would desist from the fast and make ample amends.

The Viceroy in his reply fixed the responsibility for whatever had happened on the Congress and a considerable share of it on Gandhi himself. He asked Gandhi to desist from the contemplated fast as it was 'a form of political blackmail'. Gandhi contended that it was meant to be 'an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure' from the Viceroy. Referring to the Viceroy's charge that the Congress and Gandhi were responsible for the mob violence, Gandhi protested: 'You have condemned men and women before trying them and hearing their defence. Surely, there is nothing wrong in my asking you to show me the evidence on which you hold them guilty. What you say in your letter carries no conviction. Proof should correspond to the cannons of English jurisprudence. You say that the time is not yet ripe to publish the charges against the Congress. Have you ever thought of the possibility of their being found baseless when they are put before an impartial tribunal?'

On the appointed day Gandhi began his fast at 9 a. m. in the Agha Khan Palace where he was detained. This was the first news published about Gandhi since his arrest. On the fourth day of his fast the Congress President, on the authority of the Working Committee, all of whose members had been lodged in the Ahmednagar Fort, wrote a letter to the Viceroy refuting the charge that the Congress had organized the violent movement. Government did not agree and published and widely circulated a pamphlet entitled 'Congress Responsibility for Disturbances'. It was prepared by Government itself. Extracts, torn from the context, were quoted from Gandhi's articles to suggest that (1) he was defeatist and pro-Japanese, (2) he and the Congress had planned or shown readiness to condone violence, (3) he and Congressmen were responsible for the 1942 disturbances. There were other minor accusations also. Gandhi gave detailed replies and extensively quoted from the *Harijan*, his weekly, to prove the exact contrary of what the Government were attempting to prove. Gandhi, in effect, said that either the charges against him and his col-

leagues should be withdrawn or they should be referred to an impartial tribunal.

When the vigour of the movement had spent itself and 'ravaged' India lay helpless, Gandhi once again became the focus of the country's attention. Crowds would collect in hundreds to listen to radio announcements about his health. The bulletin on his condition issued on February 20, said that his condition had become grave. Next day in the afternoon his condition grew critical; the pulse was almost imperceptible. Excited crowds were moving in the streets; even a mild provocation from police would have caused serious disturbances. The authorities, who were determined not to release him, made thorough arrangements to meet the situation should the worst happen. There was a hushed silence in the country indicative of the feeling that great tragedy was now inevitable. Three Indians of the Viceroy's Executive Council—Sir Homi Mody, N. R. Sarkar, and M. S. Aney—who pleaded in vain with the Viceroy for Gandhi's release resigned in protest. But on the 15th day of the fast, Gandhi's system began to react favourably to the fast, and he was declared out of danger; and on March 3, after completing 21 days, he broke his fast with a glass of orange juice.

Doctors were baffled. The eminent physician, Dr. B. C. Roy, said: 'Our forecasts (that Gandhiji's life cannot be saved) proved erroneous. We could only depend upon the law of averages and could only give an opinion on the basis of what would happen to an average man under similar conditions. But Gandhiji is a miracle; he sometimes baffles medical science. Full control of the mind over the body and strong determination to live, for which he fought every inch of the ground—this is how he could tide over the crisis that threatened his life at one stage of the fast.'

The tension subsided, and although the underground activities continued, there was all quiet in the country. But just about that time a second anti-British front was opened by Indians in the Far East. A conference of leading Indians was held at Tokyo, and it was resolved that propaganda for Indian independence should be intensified in Burma, Thailand and Malaya. Anti-British literature was clandestinely circulated

among British Indian troops in Malaya and Burma calling upon them to revolt. Some of the propaganda men were caught and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

In Shanghai a Ghadar Party was formed by one Osman Khan, and in the course of time, contact was established between all such parties working in different countries of the Far East. Indian political workers were mostly Sikhs, the most enthusiastic among them being Giani Pritam Singh. But the foremost among the Far East revolutionaries was Rash Behari Bose, who had escaped to Japan in 1915. He had married and settled there. The war again gave him an opportunity to show his mettle. On the day Japan declared war on the Allies, Indians in Tokyo met and formed a committee under Bose's presidentship to work for Indian independence. In Bangkok Amar Singh, an old revolutionary, who had served a term of 22 years in Indian jails, had formed the Independence League of India in December 1941. The Thai-Bharat Culture League, established sometime ago by Swami Satyananda Puri, was converted into Indian National Council. All these bodies were to carry out their plans in collaboration with the Japanese who had told them that they had no design on India. While the Japanese forces were advancing into Malaya, some Indians, under the leadership of Pritam Singh accompanied them with a view firstly to prevail upon Indian soldiers not to fight for the British and secondly to arrange for medical aid for wounded Indians.

The Japanese advance into Malaya was rapid, and the fall of Singapore undermined British morale. Immediately after the surrender Lt. Col. Hunt, the Commander of the Indian forces in Singapore, handed over his troops to the Japanese representative, Major Fujiwara, who addressing the Indian troops said that they were no more prisoners from Japanese point of view as Japan had declared war on Britain and not on Indians. Captain Mohan Singh, who was the senior most Indian officer in the 14th Punjab Regiment stationed at Jitra, was placed in command of the Indian troops. Pritam Singh had already contacted Mohan Singh, and the latter had agreed to join the movement for Indian independence.

Addressing the troops Captain Mohan Singh said: 'The days of British oppression in the East are numbered and their hated

rule must soon come to an end. The Japanese armed forces have driven them from Malaya and Singapore, and they are beating a hasty retreat in Burma. India stands on the threshold of freedom, and it is incumbent on every Indian to fight and drive away those demons who have been for so many decades sucking the life-blood of Indians. The Japanese have promised us their all-out help in the realization of our coveted dreams and it is up to us now to organize ourselves and fight for freedom of the 400 millions of our countrymen and women.'

Shortly after this, Malayan Indian civilian representatives met in Singapore and formed the Indian Independence League. The League decided to raise an Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) and to call a meeting of all Indians in East Asia at Bangkok in June 1942. The Bangkok meeting, presided over by Rash Behari Bose, was attended by 110 delegates from all over East Asia and was purely a conference of Indians, with no direct or indirect interference from the Japanese. All the speakers freely spoke their minds regarding the doubtful motives of the Japanese. Many vehemently criticised Japanese imperialism.

The meeting decided to organize an army of 1,50,000 under direct control of the Council of Action of the Indian Independence League. Mohan Singh, who was elected G. O. C. of the Indian National Army, opened his headquarters at Mount Pleasant (Singapore), a place where no Indian or Asian was allowed to walk by the British. British prisoners of war were put under his charge, and he sent them to Changi Jail, used for Indians by the British.

About 20,000 people joined the Indian National Army. The Indian community was stirred by a strong desire to contribute their mite to the freedom movement. When the INA was preparing for an attack on British India, the Japanese assumed a role of superiority, an attitude to which Indians were not prepared to submit. When Mohan Singh asked the Japanese to hand over to him the control of the Indian anti-aircraft companies being used by them, they bluntly refused to do so. The Council of Action was also receiving stories of ill-treatment of Indians by Japanese. There was a discussion between INA leaders and the Japanese authorities at which a Japanese Major-

General talked to the Indian representatives with anger and arrogance. Mohan Singh suggested to his colleagues that the INA should be dissolved, but Bose did not accept the suggestion. The differences grew, and Bose as president ordered the arrest of Mohan Singh, which was effected. Bose was not in favour of breaking away from the Japanese. His argument was: "We have neither money, nor men, nor arms; we want to fight for our freedom. But how are we to do it? I have to take help from the Japanese, but I do not want a change of masters, Japaneses domination in place of British. I do not want the Japanese to set their feet on the soil of India. But it is not possible to unite and organize the 30 lakhs of Indians, living thousands of miles away, without the cooperation of Japan, as it is beyond our power to reach them or bring them together. Japan is very busy with her war. We shall have to get as much from her as possible by a conciliatory attitude and not by quarrelling.'

After this episode the INA was re-organized by other people. Lt. Col. Bhonsle was made director of military bureau, Lt.-Col Shah Nawaz Khan chief of the general staff, and Major P. K Sehgal military secretary. The Indian Independence League was re-organized into twelve departments, the most important being the recruitment department.

The INA, in fact the Indian community, was yet a disorganized mass when a pre-eminent personality arrived in their midst. This was Subhas Chandra Bose. His departure from India and subsequent movements are a story of thrilling adventures. After the resignation of Congress Ministries towards the end of 1939, he waited for a few months patiently for a movement to be started by Gandhi, and when it did not come off by March 1940, his patience was exhausted. He called together his followers, and calling the gathering as the Anti-War Conference resolved that the 'sixth of April, the first day of the National Week, should mark the commencement of a countrywide satyagraha against the war effort'. It was an attempt to forestall Gandhi and the Congress. Bose and his followers began a movement under the auspices of the Forward Bloc. They were arrested. The movement was not a big affair. In November Bose declared from jail that he had undertaken a fast unto death as a protest against his arrest, which he contended was illegal and unwarranted. He

told the authorities: 'Release me or I shall refuse to live.' He sent a letter to Government enclosing an appeal to his countrymen, which, he requested the Government, should be published after his death. The fast continued making Bose very weak, and acting on the medical advice that he was in danger zone Government released him in December. Police guards were however posted at his house.

Bose now spent most of his time to studying scriptures and caused the impression to go round that he had become a recluse. He discussed religion and not politics. One day, dodging the guards and with the help of his close confidents, he slipped out of the house in the disguise of a Muslim divine. He reached Peshawar and thence managed to enter Kabul, where he stayed in a serai posing as a deaf and dumb Pathan on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Bose wanted to go to Moscow, but failing to get help from the Russian Ambassador who did not believe that Bose was in Kabul, he contacted the Italian embassy. There he succeeded and reached Rome from where he went to Berlin. At the beginning of May 1943 he arrived in Penang in a German submarine and flew to Tokyo to settle Indian affairs with the Japanese Government.

There was jubilation in Indian camps; all said they had now a leader amongst them. Rash Behari Bose announced at a conference of delegates from different parts of East Asia, held at Singapore, that Subhas Bose would take over from him the leadership of the Indian movement. Subhas Bose made his first broadcast from Tokyo Radio on June 26. He urged the Indians to have faith in him. He assured them that if they gave him their confidence, he would lead them to the goal of independence. His followers designated him Netaji, the leader. He set up Free India Headquarters in Singapore with himself as the Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army. A grand army parade of 20,000 Indian soldiers was held to salute Netaji. The Japanese Premier was present at the function.

Bose issued an appeal to the INA: 'Comrades! My Soldiers! Let your battle cry be "To Delhi, to Delhi." How many of you will individually survive this war of freedom I do not know. But I do know this, that we shall ultimately win and our task will not end until our surviving heroes hold the victory

parade in the Lal Killa (the Red Fort) of Ancient Dehli. For the present, I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, suffering, forced marches and death.... The Azad Hind Fauj is the national army of India and its activities and control will be completely under Indians. We shall not allow the Japanese to go there. If they try to enter against our wishes, we shall regard them as our enemies.'

All Indians, not only those in uniform, must contribute their mite to the sacred cause, Bose said at largely-attended public meetings. At one of these meetings, attended by about 7,000 people, he announced the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India. He took the oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government, and so did the Ministers appointed by him.

Next day this Government declared war on Britain and America at a mass rally of over 50,000. Early in 1944 arrangements for an invasion were finalised. Addressing a mass rally of over 50,000, Bose said: 'Soldiers of India! There, there in the distance, beyond the river, beyond those jungles, beyond those hills, lies the promised land, the soil from which we sprang, the land to which we will now return. Hark! India is calling! India's metropolis, Delhi, is calling! Three hundred and eighty-eight millions of our countrymen are calling! Blood is calling to blood. Get up. We have no time to lose. Take up your arms. The road to Delhi is the road to freedom. On to Delhi.'

By the end of January 1945 some INA battalions marched towards the Arakan front under the command of Lt. Col. Misra and had an engagement with the superior forces of the British. Among the places captured one was Maymyo, to which the headquarters of the Free India Government were shifted. Then came down the monsoon in torrents. There was a lull, during which reinforcements were rushed to the British army. The British placed a dozen guns on the hills; the INA had only one. In the second phase of the war the INA was beaten back; many perished in jungles and flooded rivers. Subhas Bose was also killed, not in the war but in a plane-crash. He was going to Tokyo from Singapore, and after the plane took off from the Taihoku airport in Taiwan at 2 p.m., one of the propellers gave

way. In less than two minutes the plane crashed to the ground. The petrol tank burst, and Bose staggered out of the plane with his clothes in flames. With serious burns all over his body he was removed to hospital where he died at 9 p. m.

In the following weeks Japan surrendered, and with the end of the main war in the East ended the ambition of the INA. The INA was no match to British might, but it left a lesson: for the first time so many thousand Indian soldiers and Indian army officers, bound by the 'oath of loyalty' to the British, demonstrated to the world that the 'oath of loyalty' was in fact a bond of slavery and broke it when an opportunity came their way to serve their motherland.

Such of the INA personnel as belonged formerly to the British Indian army were brought to India and detained in the Red Fort at Delhi and in different jails. They were about ten thousand. For the first time some news about the existence of the INA and its deeds was given in Indian newspapers in August 1945. On August 27, the Government of India issued a communique in which it said that 'the offence of going over to the enemy and fighting against his former comrades is the most serious crime that a soldier can commit. It is punishable with death by the laws of all countries... The Government of India feel, however, that allowance must be made for the circumstances, in which the rank and file found themselves placed after their capture... They will be treated with clemency... But there remain a number, who are alleged to have killed their former comrades or to have been responsible for the capture of allied soldiers and some leaders and who appear to have consciously embraced the Japanese or German cause... These men will be tired by court martial.'

Three leaders of the INA, Shah Nawaz, P. K. Sehgal, and G. S. Dhillon, were put up for trial before a special Court Martial on November 5, in the Red Fort. By this time the situation in the country had considerably changed. The members of the Congress Working Committee had been released (June 1945) as also most other Congressmen. On grounds of health Gandhi had been set free much earlier, in March 1944. Jawarharlal Nehru made, by his speeches and statements, the INA trial a question of public concern. There was tremendous enthusiasm in the

country as if the INA were still an active body fighting for freedom. Books and pamphlets were published of the INA's great deeds. The name of Subhas Bose seemed to overshadow that of Nehru, even that of Gandhi. The Congress Working Committee organized the defence of the three INA leaders, who were charged with waging war against the 'King Emperor of India'. An additional charge against Dhillon was of murder and against the other two of abetment to murder. As the trial progressed public interest increased. All said openly that these men with thousands of other comrades had fought with a noble motive. There were demonstrations in the streets of many cities and towns, reminiscent of the days of the civil disobedience movements.

The Special Court held the three 'accused' guilty of the charge of waging war against the King. Shah Nawaz was convicted for abetment to murder also, while the other two were cleared of this charge. The Court recommended transportation for life for all the three and forfeiture of their arrears of pay and allowances. The Commander-in-Chief confirmed the sentences, but having regard to the circumstances then prevailing remitted the sentence of transporation for life. The three men were released; tension in the country subsided, and there was jubilation everywhere. This trial made Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon public heroes.

Now opened, in the history of India, a new chapter, a chapter of the final negotiations which led to freedom.

22

Freedom at Last

After the termination of the war in Europe but while hostilities were still continuing in the East and Japan was yet to be defeated finally, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, made an announcement (June 14, 1945) saying that the British Government was now in a position to take a realistic view of the Indian situation and inviting Indian leaders to take counsel together with him with a view to the formation of an *entirely* Indian Executive Council excepting the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. Even the portfolio of extenrnal affairs would be placed in the charge of an Indian member. The main task before the Council, Wavell said, would be: (1) prosecution of the war against Japan; (2) to carry on the present Government of India until a new permanent constitution could be agreed upon and came into force; (3) exploration of means for an agreed solution. The new Executive Council would function under the 1935 Act, but the Viceroy would not use his veto powers unreasonably and against Indian interests.

The same day the Secretary of State for India repeated his old offer in the House of Commons. He said: 'The offer is based on two main principles. First, no limit is set to India's freedom to decide her own destiny whether as a free partner in the Commonwealth or even without it. Second, that this can only be achieved under a constitution or constitutions framed by Indians to which the main elements are consenting parties.

The Congress agreed to the proposal and drew up a list of names for the entire Council; it included representation for Muslims. But the proposal remained in abeyance because of the Muslim League's intransigence; it said that it alone repre-

sented the entire Muslim community. In the mean time the Conservative Party lost the general election in Britain and the Labour Party assumed power with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister, and the Indian question received added importance. Wavell was summoned to London for consultations. He reached there on August 25, and returning to India on September 18 made a fresh announcement, which said:

'It is the intention of His Majesty's Government to convene as soon as possible a Constitution-Making Body and, as a preliminary step, they have authorised me to undertake, immediately after the elections, discussions with representatives of the Legislative Assemblies in the provinces to ascertain whether the proposals contained in the 1942 Declaration are acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme is preferable.

'His Majesty's Government are proceeding to the consideration of the Treaty which will require to be concluded between Great Britain and India.

'During these preparatory stages the Government of India must be carried on and urgent economic and social problems must be dealt with. Furthermore, India has to play her full part in working out the New World Order. His Majesty's Government have, therefore, further authorised me, as soon as the results of the provincial elections are published, to take steps to bring into being an Executive Council which will have the support of the main Indian parties.'

Next day almost a similar statement was made by the British Prime Minister.

The anouncement was considered by the Congress Working Committee and the A-ICC and characterised as vague. The Secretary of State for India, therefore, made a clarification on September 23: 'Self-government within the British Commonwealth carried with it freedom of choice. No member of it is bound to other members by bonds other than those of mutual assent. This will be equally true of India, but we hope and believe that when free choice is placed before them, Indians will decide in their own interest to remain within the British Commonwealth.'

On December 4 he made another statement—this time in the House of Lords—affirming and elucidating the previous

announcements and declaring that a Parliamentary Delegation would be sent to India. He said: 'Unjustified suggestions have gained wide currency in India that these discussions would be a fruitful source of delay. I desire to make it plain that His Majesty's Government regard the setting up of a constitution-making body by which Indians will decide their own future and also other proposals embodied in the announcement as a matter of the greatest urgency.

'This misunderstanding has led His Majesty's Government to consider whether opporunities of personal contact between this country and India, which have been greatly interrupted during recent years, cannot now be increased. His Majesty's Government are therefore arranging for a Parliamentary Delegation to go to India under the auspices of the Empire Parliamentary Association.'

The Parliamentary Delegation came to India, met leading men of different shades of opinion, and returned home in the second week of February 1946. It acknowledged the fact that political differences in the country had disappeared in a complete unanimity on the demand for independence. Even a Conservative Party member of the Delegation said: 'India has reached full stature of political manhood.' The Delegation recommended that Indian independence could no longer be delayed. (It consisted of Richards (leader), Nicholson, Major Wyatt, Sorensen, Mrs. Nichol, Bottomley, Lord Munster, Lord Chorley, Brigadier Low, and Hopkin Morris.)

Then came a Cabinet Mission consisting of three Ministers—Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr. A. V. Alexander and Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India. The Prime Minister making an announcement in Parliament said: 'My colleagues are going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavours to help her to attain freedom as speedily and fully as possible. What form of government is to replace the present regime is for India to decide, but our desire is to help her to set up forthwith a machinery for making that decision. India herself must choose as to what will be her future situation and her position in the world.'

Referring to the minorities he said: 'We are mindful of the rights of the minorities and the minorities should be able to

live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place veto on the advance of majority.'

He also dealt with the consequences arising from British withdrawal: 'Government, which takes over the assets of the Government, will also take over the liabilities. That again is a point to be dealt with later on. It does not concern the immediate setting up of the instrument of decision. With regard to the Treaty, we are not going to hang out for anything for our own advantage which would be to the disadvantage of India.'

Concluding he said: 'In the mass of Asia, an Asia ravaged by war, we have one country that has been seeking to apply the principles of democracy. I have always felt myself that political India might be the light of Asia. My colleagues are going out to India resolved to succeed and I am sure every one will wish them god-speed.'

The statement was hailed by nationalist India as intimating a genuine desire of the British to withdraw. But the League leader Jinnah was not happy. He characterised it as 'most deplorable'. He told the Leaguers: 'Let your sword arm play a magnificent part in the achievement of Pakistan.'

The Sikhs, apprehending that the Punjab might ultimately have to be included in the Muslim State, stole Jinnah's thunder by demanding a homeland for them. Jinnah tried to circumvent them by saying: 'The Sikhs as a nation are entitled to a state of their own and I am not opposed to it in principle.' He asked the Sikh leaders to specify the area where Sikhistan could be carved out.

The Cabinet Mission arrived on March 23, 1946. After a week of exploratory talks with the Viceroy, his Executive Council and the Provincial Governors, the Mission interviewed a large number of Indian leaders representing various political parties and the princes. The talks, which continued with small breaks in between up to April 26, yielded no solution of the Congress-League tangle. The Congress representatives told the Mission that the British Government would find the solution not in any agreement between the Congress and the League but in handing over full control of Indian affairs to the Congress or the League or any other organization. Whoever held the charge of the Government would endeavour to seek co-operation

of other parties and groups in the country. This proposal was not acceptable to the Mission and the Viceroy.

On May 27 the Cabinet Mission made a move for a tripartite conference between itself and the representatives of the Congress and the League. The basis of the discussion at the conference was to be the following note enclosed with the Secretary of State's letter of invitation: 'The future constitutional structure of British India to be as follows: A Union Government dealing with the following subjects: Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. There will be two groups of Provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu provinces, and the other of the predominantly Muslim provinces, dealing with all other subjects which the provinces in the respective groups desire to be dealt with in common. The Provincial Governments will deal with all other subjects and will have all the residuary sovereign rights.' Both the Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad, and the League President, Jinnah, repudiated this basis for different reasons. The Congress deprecated the formation of groups of provinces on religious basis; the league missed in it a definite assurance for Pakistan. Nevertheless, both parties accepted the invitation and nominated their representatives.

The conference opened at Simla on May 5, and after several days of discussions announced its failure to produce an agreed solution. The League's main demands, as presented to the conference, were:

(1) Six of the Indian provinces—the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal and Assam—should be grouped together as the Pakistan group. This group should have a separate constitution-making body. (2) There should be parity of representation between the Pakistan group and the group of the Hindu provinces in the Union Executive and the Union Legislature, 'if any'. (3) The two constitution-making bodies would decide whether to have a legislature or not at the centre; they would also decide the method of providing the union with finance, but in no event should it be by means of taxation.

The Congress representatives' viewpoint was that a constituent assembly should be set up to draw up a constitution for

India, implying that it was against the League demand for two constitution-making bodies. The Assembly should be formed of representatives elected by the provincial Legislative Assemblies by proportional representation. It asked for a much stronger Federal Union with 'power to obtain for itself the finances it required'. The Congress conceded the League demand for groups of provinces 'if some of the provinces wanted them'.

The Cabinet Mission itself deprecated the League demand: 'We examined the question of a separate and fully independent sovereign state of Pakistan as claimed by the Muslim League. Such a Pakistan would comprise two areas; one in the north-west consisting of the provinces of the Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier, and British Baluchistan; the other in the north-east consisting of the provinces of Bengal and Assam.' (Let it be noted that Assam was a Hindu majority province, and West Bengal and East Punjab also had Hindu majorities.)

The mission calculated the figures of population. In the north-western area, it said, the Muslims were 62.07 per cent and in the other 51.69 per cent of the total population; in the remainder of British India they numbered some 20 million dispersed amongst a total population of 188 million. 'These figures show,' the Mission contended, 'that the setting up of a separate sovereign State of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal problem; nor can we see any justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and of Bengal and Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally in our view be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. This point would particularly affect the position of Sikhs.... Any division of the Punjab would of necessity divide the Sikhs leaving substantial bodies of Sikhs on both sides of the boundary.' Then, after enumerating other considerations, such as economic, geographical, military, defence, navy, air force, etc., the Mission said: 'We are therefore unable to advise the British Government that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign States.'

The Cabinet Mission published a plan for the formation of a constituent assembly which, since it gravitated towards the Congress approach, was rejected by the Muslim League. There were prolonged discussions, and the only upshot was the installation of an Indian Executive Council headed by the Viceroy. In itself, this was a unique happening. The Congress Party was for the first time associated with the Central Government with its team headed by Jawaharlal Nehru. For a while the League stayed away. It insisted that all the Muslim representatives in the council should be nominated by it. It took its stand on the fact that it had emerged from the Provincial Legislative Assemblies elections as the single representative of the Muslims of India—of the total of 492 Muslim seats, it had gained 425. The Congress, on the other hand, also insisted that it was not going to surrender its secular status by conceding that it represented only Hindus. In the North-West Frontier Province, the Congress won 19 Muslim seats against the League's gain of 17. But in the rest of India, the Congress was able to secure only five Muslim seats, which proved the League's claim—in ten of the eleven provinces the Congress did not represent the Muslims. The Frontier had a Congress Ministry. The other Muslim majority province where the League failed to form government despite its gain of 73 out of the 86 Muslim seats was the Punjab; the other parties joining together produced an absolute majority circumventing the League.

Though the League later joined the Executive Council agreeing to let the Congress Party have a Muslim member in its share of Hindu seats, it concentrated its attention on the Frontier and the Punjab, for without them there would be no Pakistan. The Muslim League organizations in the two provinces incited the Muslims to rise against the Hindus. Whatever means might have to be adopted, the name of the Congress must be wiped out in the Frontier; and in the Punjab, the coalition ministry must be compelled by lawlessness to resign, making room for the League to step in. The Muslims and the Hindus of the Punjab, who had lived for ages in amity and harmony, were now to be killed by each other. There was an orgy of violence, and the situation became so distressing that in March 1947 the Congress Working Committee recommend-

ed division of the province into Muslim Punjab and non-Muslim Punjab.

The situation in India was threatening to become anarchical, and on June 3, 1947, the Viceroy of India—Lord Mountbatten had since replaced Lord Wavell—announced that the British Government wanted to transfer power to Indian hands almost immediately on the basis of partition of India. The statement he issued said: 'It is clear that any constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly cannot apply to those parts of the country which are unwilling to accept it.' It laid down the following procedure as 'the best practical method of ascertaining the wishes of the people of such areas on the issue whether their constitution is to be framed (a) in the existing constituent assembly', which had earlier been settled in the Cabinet Mission Plan, 'or (b) in a new and separate constituent assembly consisting of the representatives of those areas which decide not to participate in the existing Constituent Assembly.'

The Statement laid down the following procedure: 'The provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab (excluding the European members) will, therefore, each be asked to meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim-majority districts and the other the rest of the province. The members of the two parts of each legislative assembly sitting separately will be empowered to vote whether or not the province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either part decides in favour of partition, division will take place and arrangements will be made accordingly.' The Legislative Assembly of Sind would not be divided into two parts since that province did not have any Hindu majority district; the whole of the Assembly would meet as a single unit to decide on the question of partition—to decide whether or not it would join Pakistan.

In regard to the Frontier province the Statement provided for a referendum to be made to the electors of the Legislative Assembly to choose between the existing Constituent Assembly and a new, separate constituent assembly. A similar referendum was provided for the Sylhet district of Assam, which was the only Muslim majority district in that province and having a common border with East Pakistan.

The Plan was put into effect. The verdict was for the division of the Punjab into Hindu Punjab and Muslim Punjab and Hindu Bengal and Muslim Bengal—all the four parts had a fair number of minority populations. In the Sind assembly all the Muslim members voted for Pakistan, and since they constituted majority their decision prevailed.

In the North-West Frontier Province, where Muslim voters had rejected Pakistan at the polls of 1946, the referendum was held in conditions of anarchy and violence. Muslim Leaguers were masters of the situation; it was a victory of violence over non-violence. Muslim Congressmen and the Red Shirts, who had taken to non-violence and to a different method of fighting, were in a helpless state. Their leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, felt that a fair referendum was impossible and decided to boycott it. The result was as the League wished it to be: over fifty per cent of the voters voted for partition. Sylhet gave a similar verdict under similar circumstances.

The issues were now clear: The British would quit and India would be divided. India would frame its future constitution in her own Constituent Assembly and Pakistan in hers. Therefore in July the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act, which provided that on August 15, 1947, the two independent Dominions, India and Pakistan, would come into existence. The Act vested in the legislatures of the two Dominions full powers to make laws both for internal and external operations and laid down that no law enacted by these legislatures would be void or inoperative on the ground that it was repugnant to British law. This Act divested the British Parliament of its power of control over India and made India and Pakistan masters of their destinies.

At the midnight hour of August 15, which had just heralded a new era, the Constituent Assembly of India passed a resolution proclaiming Independence. The proceedings were most impressive. With moving eloquence Nehru, the Prime Minister, said: 'Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.'

As the midnight hour struck Mountbatten was sitting quietly at his desk. 'There was an air about him of serenity, almost detachment. He took off his reading glasses, turned the keys on his dispatch boxes and summoned his press attache' to help tidy the room and stow away 'the outward and visible signs of Viceregal activity.'

There was a candid call for introspection in the speech the President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, made on the occasion. 'Let us gratefully acknowledge,' he said, 'that while our achievement is in no small measure due to our own sufferings and sacrifices, it is also the result of world forces and events, and last though not the least, it is the consummation and fulfilment of the historic tradition and democratic ideals of the British race.... The period of domination of British over India ends today, and our relationship with Britian is henceforward going to rest on a basis of equality, of mutual goodwill and mutual profit.'

Without such introspective note the story of the freedom struggle will not be complete. Of all the attempts made by Indians to drive out the British, the biggest was that of 1857, which is called by different writers differently—the Mutiny, the Great Revolt, the First War of Indian Independence. The Empire was shaken to its roots, but it survived for another 90 years. What is generally called the Rebellion of 1942 was also a big attempt; it too was suppressed, and the British, despite their preoccupation in the war, emerged dominant as ever. Between 1857 and 1942 there were numerous interludes of violent activities as well as massive non-violent movements. But the British remained on the surface at least, in a dominant position. This circumstance raises a pertinent question, which is often asked by many an Indian even now. The question is, 'Why did the British decide to withdraw?'

It is a difficult question to answer. An analysis of what Dr. Rajendra Prasad called 'world forces...historic tradition and democratic ideals of the British race' should make the question answerable in part. Up to as late as 1912 British spokesmen had in their Parliament been declaring that democratic institutions in India, akin to those of self-governing Dominions, were, for all times to come, beyond the pale of practical politics. No

one foresaw then that only two years later Britain would be involved in a war which would shatter her economy. The criterion of political thinking that dominated the minds of the ruling junta in Britain underwent a change. The British had entered the war 'to save democracy' and in reality to 'save their empire'. The war exposed the supposed virtues of an empire in the 20th century. Britain came out victorious but with a heavy load of debts on her head. By treaties and by other methods available to a victor she contrived to make arrangements designed to prevent a war of that magnitude in the future. One of the arrangements, relevant to India, was the declaration that India would be made self-governing by stages. It was a conspicuous departure from the 1912 statement of the Secretary of State for India. But the reforms of 1919 were regarded by Indians as an excuse to postpone the promised self-government indefinitely, and the British Empire remained an eyesore to other ambitious powers of the world. Hitler said in the midst of the second World War that if the British liberated India, he would bow before them.

Germany had her own exorbitant ambitions and so had Japan. On the other side were some democratic countries who, while not prepared to bring the matter to an issue by compelling Britain to liquidate her Empire, wanted the principle of democracy to be applied to British dependencies. Yet another force, quite a mighty force, had appeared in the world in the shape of a communist state—the USSR. About six years after the emergence of that Socialist state a communist party had appeared in India, and not only an empire but the capitalist system was made to look anachronistic. With the freedom movement in India was now sought to be associated the new political philosophy of Socialism. Britain possessed the biggest empire and yet she claimed to stand at the head of the democratic world! There was enough in these pretensions to expose Britain to a glaring contradiction; on the one hand she incurred the derision of democratic countries and on the other, of the Socialist State of Russia.

In India the mounting unrest was, in effect, far more oppressive to British nerves than the so-called Mutiny of 1857. The Revolt came and went leaving the British stronger than before

to rule India. But the continuous unrest and the daily and hourly reminder in the form of pin-pricks, was worse than the Revolt. The situation in India, as it developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, had been visualised with unwanted prescience by Sir Charles Trevelyn as early as 1838:

> I passed some years in parts of India where, owing to the comparative novelty of our rule and to the absence of any attempt to alter the current of native feelings, the national habit of thinking remained unchanged. There, high and low, rich and poor, had only one idea of improving their political condition. The upper classes live upon the prospect of regaining their former pre-eminence; and the lower, upon that of having the avenues to wealth and distinction reopened to them by the re-establishment of a Native Government. Even sensible and comparatively well-affected natives had no notion that there was any remedy for the existing depressed state of their nation except the sudden and absolute expulsion of the English. After that I resided for some years in Bengal, and there I found quite another set of ideas prevalent among the educated natives. Instead of thinking of cutting the throats of the English, they were aspiring to sit with them on the grand jury or on the bench of magistrates. Instead of speculating on Punjab or Nepalese politics, they were discussing the advantages of printing and free discussion in oratorical English speeches at debating societies which they had established among themselves. The most sanguine dimly look forward in the distant future to the establishment of a national representative assembly as the consummation of their hopes—all of them being fully sensible that these plans of improvement could only be worked out with the aid and protection of the British Government by the gradual improvement of their countrymen in knowledge and morality.... No doubt both these schemes of national improvement suppose the termination of the English rule; but while that event is the beginning of one, it is only the conclusion of the other. In one the sudden and violent overthrow of our government is a necessary

preliminary; in the other, a long continuance of our administration and the gradual withdrawal of it as the people become fit to govern themselves, are equally indispensable.

Macaulay's oft-quoted statement had been made three years earlier (in 1835) in the context of education of Indians: 'It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system until it has outgrown that system, that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government, that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. Whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history.... The sceptre may pass away from us. Victory may be inconsistent to out arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverse.'

Therefore it will be appropriate to say that constitutional agitation was adopted by educated Indians as the fittest way of taking power, in instalments spread over a number of decades, from British hands. This method fitted in with the British approach to things political, although the men in power, whether in India or in England, would do their best to put down agitations. They put down agitations in Britain itself but had always to yield. They yielded in India first in 1861, then successively in 1892, 1909, 1919 and 1935; and finally in 1947 they decided to pack up and go.

In 1935 they had given India a substantial measure of provincial autonomy. But the substance of power remained in their hands and the empire was intact giving the impression to the world outside and also to Indians that their only concern was to prevent by any expedient the break-up of the empire. They still provoked an urge for empire-building in the breasts of those who envied the British Empire; and in 1939 Britain was again faced with a world war. She again emerged victorious but bowed down by intolerable burdens of debt and rehabilitation.

In the midst of the war itself the realization had dawned upon British statesmen that one world war was enough not only to offset the imperial gains of decades but to leave heavy liabili-

ties for the future. The East India Company came to India to trade and made stupendous additions to trade profits after founding an empire. In the course of the decades Britain's economic life became dependent on the exploitation of the empire: a considerable portion of the huge amounts of revenues were used for giving employment to British citizens and for filling the coffers of industrialists and others. From a purely business point of view, what good is an empire which is found to be, when the balance is struck, a liability rather than an asset? The two world wars made the empire a liability. And what a liability! All the money that came from the empire went into the bottomless pit of war expenses, and needlessly were the British sitting all the time on a volcanoe which always held out the fear of erupting at any time. There was exploitation and there was little gain in the ultimate analysis to the exploiter.

The question that came after this realization was whether Britain would be economically better off with the empire or without it. To the prudent the answer was: without it. There was prudence in it no doubt. Indian freedom brought with it new urges for development and an atmosphere of continuing friendship and trade relations with Britain. Since independence, Britain has been doing much more business with India than ever before and enjoying a big favourable balance. Unlike other European imperial powers, she exercised foresight and withdrew from India, nay from a number of other dependencies, in an atmosphere of friendship and good will. She was not interested whether India remained within the imperial framework as a Dominion or declared herself a republic. India had solemnly pledged herself to complete independence. On August 15, 1947, she attained under an Act of Parliament Dominion Status, and on January 26, 1950, after framing a new constitution, she became a republic.

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INDEX